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FROM THE EDITOR

My mother died just before lockdown in a hospital that had gone into full lockdown mode three weeks before. She suffered tremendously and lockdown made it extremely difficult to care for her in the last 12 days of her life. Few people realise that Covid-19 makes access to affected hospitalised loved ones virtually impossible.

I think 2020 was an extremely difficult year for people, mostly due to the lack of science and information about Covid-19. This impacted on planning globally and cost millions of people their jobs and their health. The collateral damage cost trillions and exceeded the actual Corona deaths by far.

A few brilliant mathematicians and scientists gasped at the insanity of slavishly following the non-peer reviewed paper of Prof Neil Fergusson who is famous for having gotten his mathematical models wrong for many different outbreaks.(Read more about that on www.gayptagessa and click on our Lockdown support section). The WHO, who bought these snake oil mathematical models still appears in denial that they messed up badly.

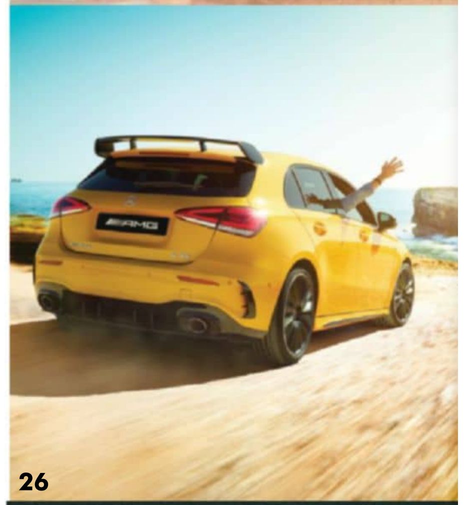
Globally it took 6 months before the science behind lockdown was questioned. One wonders why so many scientists were neutered intellectually. Why attack the few enlightened professors and doctors, who questioned the WHO, or why we are being led by the nose by opportunistic politicians and tenderpreneurs. This tiny handful of objective scientists were the Galileo Galileis of our time facing the medieval flat earthers. These questions, disastrous consequences, and exaggerated mortality rates will be debated and argued in courts and over dinner tables for a long time. We all suffered badly in some form or other whether financially, emotionally, medically, or financially.

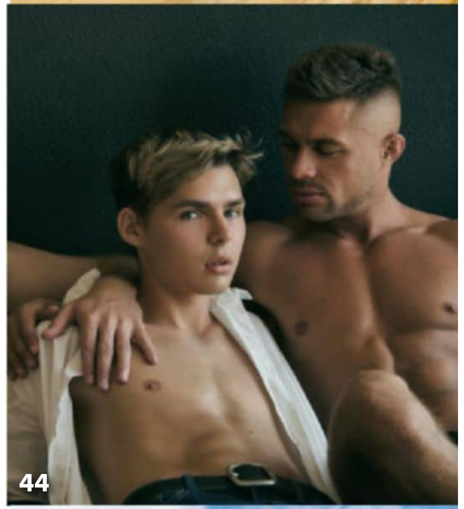
I suspect that ordinary people no longer trust politicians as much as they used to.

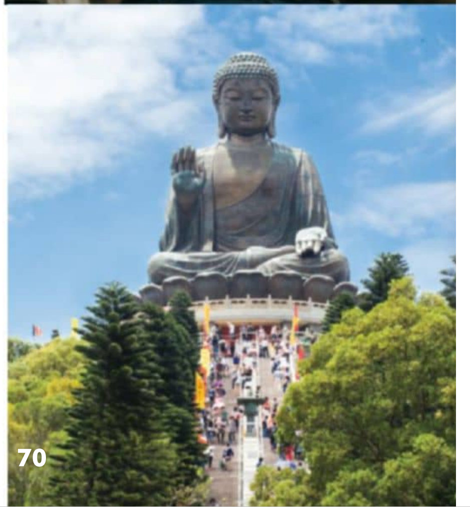
Whilst we observed massive destruction of printed media, we realised how the marketing world and PR industry consistently underestimated the value of all the free print coverage they received. Following that, the demise of PR agencies and companies of all sizes appear to be a logical consequence. Our biosphere is interdependent, and every player has a place.

Our website has grown tremendously during lockdown, but the benefit of linking digital, print and our global archives is indisputable. Our website has turned into a proper news site for longer than a year and the synergy between all the different platforms is better than it has ever been.

Rubin







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Dreamer, lover of beautiful things, artist and wordsmith, Alan is a wearer of many hats. From restoring old Japanese scroll paintings and remounting them as new art objects, to making art jewellery, there are few quiet moments in his day. When there are, you'll most likely find him with his nose in a book or sketching designs for a new project.

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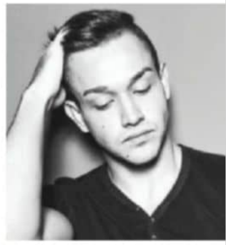
Shawn is an entrepreneur, owner and creator of Brand-Me, a signage and screen-printing company. A passionate fitness and obstacle course race enthusiast, and a self-development fanatic always up for personal challenges, he is an avid motoring enthusiast, spending his days speaking and writing all things cars. He's unable to function without coffee.



JEAN-PIERRE DE LA CHAUMETTE
Our décor and design guru, Jean-Pierre has his finger properly on the pulse. As a publicist and talented interior designer, he is well-placed to search out the latest talent and trends. From the must-haves to the must-sees, Jean-Pierre always ensures that our décor pages are packed with inspiration.

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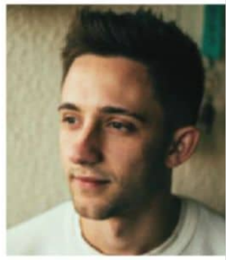
Jacques is a chemist, coach and consultant by day, but music makes his heart beat faster. He has been doing music articles and reviews for various publications over the past 15 years. His own music collection "sings" praises to a diverse taste ranging from Rachmaninov to Rammstein to Rihanna. He is also an amateur music composer and fitness instructor.

CIARAN R. MAIDWELL
Ciaran is a short story writer, television scriptwriter and producer living in Cape Town. He is passionate about literature and the power it has to broaden people's minds and perspectives, especially in relation to gay issues. He enjoys eavesdropping, good grammar and copious amounts of tea.



LEON VAN NIEROP
Leon is a film critic, broadcaster, writer, producer, radio and TV-presenter, journalist and university professor. He was head of the TUT Film School and published two academic books. He has done a TV-series on the history of Afrikaans film and has written 25 novels, TV series, dramas and radio serials

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COLLAGEN LIFT® PARIS MEN

Male grooming just got easier as men are becoming more and more interested in anti-aging. Collagen Lift® Paris has developed a drinkable collagen just for men and which targets the areas men need most – skin, hair, stamina, energy and immunity.

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by IMRAAN VAGAR

GAY WHILE INDIAN

A MINORITY REPORT

Contrary to what the title of this article might suggest, I do not traffic in essentialist identity politics. For the record, when I meet someone for the first time I assess him, her or they (if that's their preferred gender pronoun) on the quality of their character, the contours and intricacies of their individual personality and ultimately what he, she or they stands for. Race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status are merely extraneous data points – that while certainly noted – do not colour (no pun intended) my perception of who an individual is at their core. And I expect, nay, demand the same in return.

The fact that I am a proud gay man of Indian extraction is merely incidental or ancillary to my identity. Meaning that while I'm both supremely comfortable in my queerness and appreciative of my ethnic heritage, neither of those two intersecting descriptors singularly define who I am as a person. I will not allow the depth and complexity of my unique character and set of attributes to be distilled and neatly summed up in a couple of superficial epithets like "gay" or "Indian" for the sake of expedience or intellectual laziness.

So writing this article presented me with the dilemma and challenge of having to simplify and pigeonhole my nuanced, hyphenated identity into a couple of narrow, one-dimensional archetypes, all in the service of specifically addressing a very unique and oft-overlooked segment of the LGBTQ+ community: my gay and bisexual brothers and sisters of Indian origin.

As a long-time television host and broadcaster I had always chosen to keep my personal life very purposefully private for many complex reasons that I recently unpacked in a candid and vulnerable post entitled "WTF Took You So Long?"* on my personal blog. But an avalanche of outreach from young, deeply-closeted gay and bi Indian men via my Instagram last year precipitated a fierce "urgency of now" moment that compelled me to come out in a very public and vocal way – to kick-start a much-needed conversation around why so many young men in the Indian "community" continue to internalise outmoded and harmful patriarchal and colonial-era homophobic propaganda in this age of ostensible "wokeness".

I put "community" in quotation marks because Indian people in South Africa and indeed around the world are no more homogenous or monolithic a group than the LGBTQ+ community. We're capable of putting up a unified front in times of strife (for example, during the apartheid years), but some Indians also tend to sharply divide themselves along linguistic, religious and even class-based lines in times of peace and prosperity.

In the follow-up to my first coming-out article on my blog I explain that I am perhaps uniquely positioned to speak to the lived experiences of all my queer Indian brothers and sisters because I grew up in Durban to a devout Hindu Gujarati father, a deeply-religious Muslim mother and Christian and Hindu Tamilian in-laws to boot, so I've been exposed to all facets of Indian cultural, social and religious life.

So, if you're reading this as a queer Indian person – or person of colour – and you're struggling with coming to terms with your sexuality, I have a message for you:

I used to be you. I see you, I feel you. I love you. But if you want to fast-track your journey towards self-acceptance you may want to start with "decolonising" your mind first.

If you do your research, you'll soon come to realise that there's nothing "unnatural" or counter-cultural about your sexual or gender expression. You're really just the latest victim of one of the most egregious and oldest, yet stubbornly enduring con-jobs of our time: Patriarchy and European imperialism, more specifically, British colonialism – and its priggish, prudish Victorian-era attitudes towards sex and sexuality.

When homophobic people in India and Africa whine about homosexuality being a "Western" fad or construct, my blood boils! Homosexuality isn't a Western import, homophobia is.

In pre-colonial India (and Africa for that matter) same-sex love wasn't just accepted, it was part of the culture. The practice of homosexuality and lesbianism, for instance, is well-documented and preserved in ancient temple carvings like the Khajuraho Monuments – a cluster of Hindu and Jain Temples in Madhya Pradesh, India. I should know. I filmed an entire feature on the UNESCO World Heritage Site and let me tell you, some of the explicit scenes depicted in their relief carvings made even this sex-positive guy go…"Whaa?"

And don't even get me started on the Kama Sutra, the original manual to how to live your "best life", that's further testimony to ancient India's age of enlightenment and sexual permissiveness.

In fact, India was seriously "woke" back in the day. For example, in ancient Indian texts, they practically invented "gender fluidity". In the Mahābhārata, one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, there is the story of Shikhandi, who was born as female and later undergoes a sex change to become a man and fight in the Kurukshetra war alongside his father. Or how about Lord Vishnu's beautiful and seductive femme fatale incarnation, Goddess Mohini, who enchanted Lord Shiva and bore him a son, Maha Shasta, or Ayyappa/Aiyanar to South Indians? I'm not implying that theirs was a homosexual relationship, but it does suggest to me that Hinduism embraces the transcendental and non-binary nature of the immortal soul, which is neither male nor female. And I think that's fabulous!

To my Muslim brothers and sisters, are you aware that the Qur'an doesn't explicitly condemn homosexual orientation, only sexual impropriety? The Qur'an even acknowledges the possibility that some people are not attracted to members of the opposite sex, by making mention of men who have no desire for women. For Muslims, Jews and Christians alike, the story of Sodom, or the people of the Prophet Lut in the Qur'an, is often cited as a condemnation of male homosexuality, but upon scrutiny it's not a story about consensual sex between men, it's a cautionary tale about rape and inhospitality.

Take comfort in the fact that the global Islamic community is gradually changing its attitudes to be more inclusive of its LGBTQ+ members. Did you know that there are actually twelve openly gay Imams in the world? One of our very own, South African Imam Muhsin Hendricks (who is in a sanctified "nikkah" or marriage to a Hindu man by the way), is part of a growing movement that is challenging archaic notions of gender and sexuality within Islam. In an interview** with *The South African*, he soberingly reminds us that "the Qur'an is not obsessed with gays", but the traditional "patriarchy that sits behind Islam" is. "For if gender becomes fluid, where does the patriarchy ground itself?" he adds.

So, in conclusion, every time you allow yourself to succumb to fear, shame, guilt, or self-loathing around your queerness, know that you're unwittingly doing the bidding of paternalistic old men and dead White colonialists. If my "Gora" (Hindi for White) common-law husband can express routine outrage and condemnation over the harmful legacy of his ancestors, then so can you.

In the immortal words of the lovely ladies of En Vogue, "Free your mind…and the rest will follow."

**www.anexaminedlife.co.za/coming-out-part1/*

***www.thesouthafrican.com/news/i-am-an-imam-but-that-im-also-gay-and-im-prepared-to-die-for-this/*

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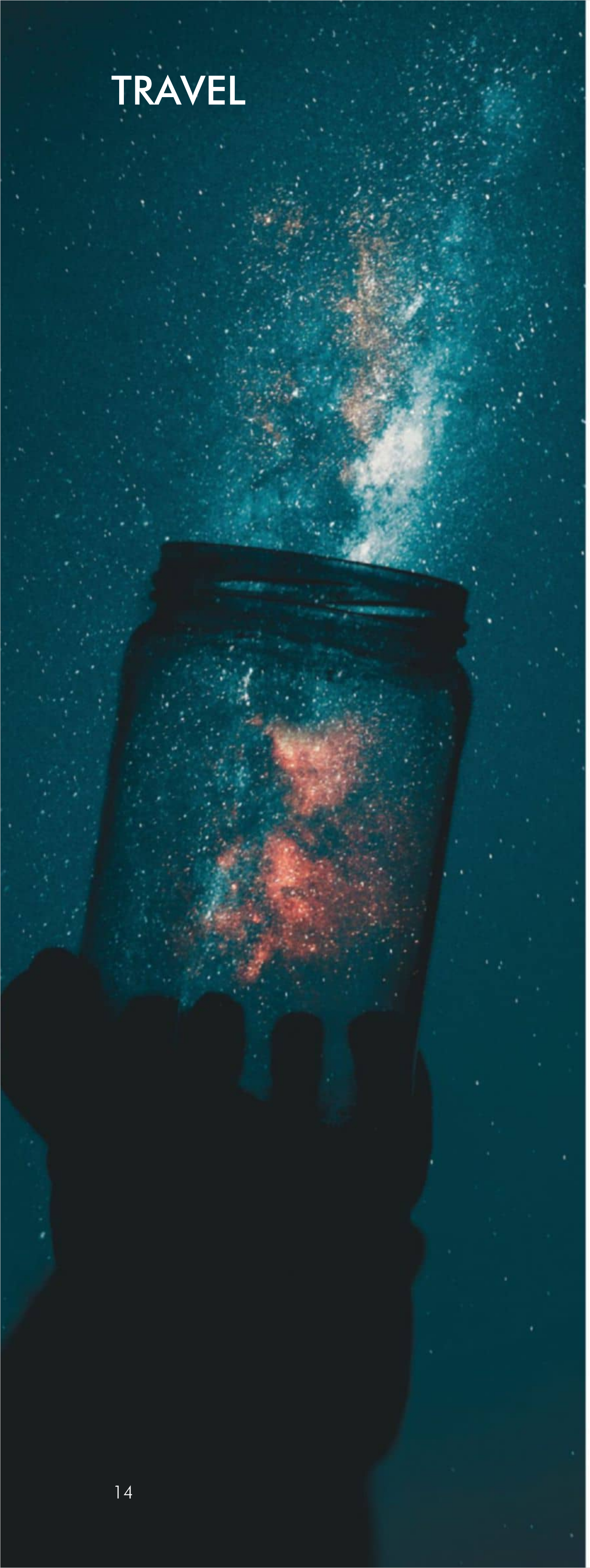


by ALAN SAMONS

A BALM FOR THE SOUL

Ah, to travel again. This is a refrain I've heard more and more during our interminable lockdown. Whether to a nearby town, the seaside, or some far-flung destination, travel truly soothes the soul and broadens one's own horizons.

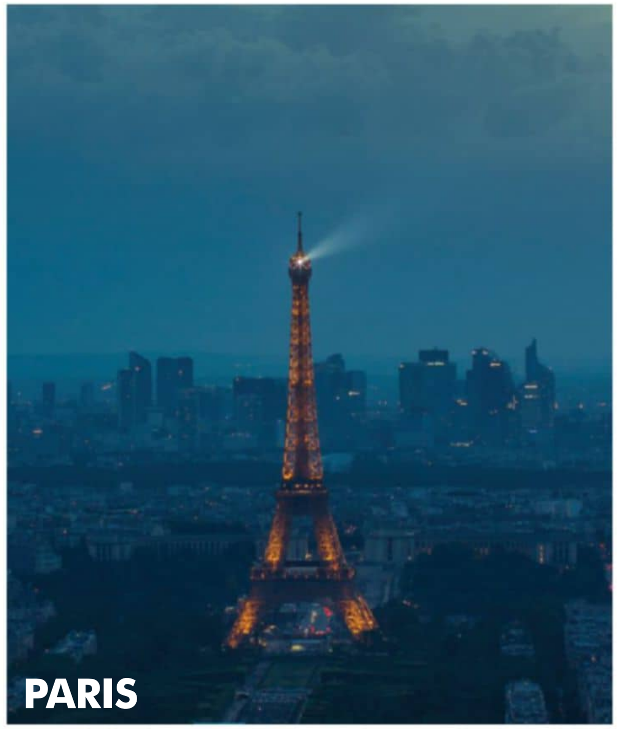
Travelling brings us into contact with other cultures and their quirks and if you're not afraid to dive in boots and all, you will meet new people, experience other cultures and certainly have more than a few interesting experiences.

AMSTERDAM

A few years ago, we were in Amsterdam for Pride. Now that was something! But walking around the old city at night on a balmy evening something seemed just slightly unfamiliar. No, not the canals, or the language – the lack of curtains! At first it felt slightly odd and voyeuristic to look directly into people's homes, seeing someone at work behind a computer, or a family having a meal. The Dutch, it seems, disdain curtains and it can be unsettling as a first-time visitor. But soon we started relaxing and enjoyed these scenes of daily life that are so totally unfamiliar to South Africans with our high walls, burglar bars and layers of fabric covering our windows. And, the house-proud Dutch don't mind one taking a discreet look into their often beautifully furnished homes.

JAPAN

Should you find yourself in Japan, one of the most pleasurable things you could do is to book a stay at a ryokan. These traditional inns are a true reflection of Japanese hospitality. And if you get to stay in one, it is certainly worth it to book even just one night and splurge – they don't come cheap! Many now have individual bathrooms, but if you can cast your modesty aside, a soak in a communal bath is just heavenly. Do bear in mind tattoos are frowned upon. Onsen (hot spring resorts) are geared at relaxing in often near boiling natural hot springs. Meals at onsen resorts and ryokan are works of art, eaten alone in one's room, so all the better to savour the presentation and flavours. Forget cherry blossoms and Mount Fuji – this is the real Japan.



PARIS

Paris, the City of Bells, is a favourite destination for many a romantic, but what few tourists know is that below ground, there is possibly one of the creepiest, yet most poignant sites you could visit – the Paris Catacombs. In the late eighteenth century, the decision was taken to move the contents of the city's cemeteries to the Tombe-Issoire quarries, then located outside of the city under the plain of Montrouge. On 7 April 1786, the site was consecrated as the Paris Municipal Ossuary, but soon took on the name "Catacombs" in reference to the ancient Roman catacombs. Here lie the bones, neatly stacked, of more than six million Parisians.

BERLIN

Berlin is a blast! Beyond the typical tourist sites lie a hidden world that is best explored with a personal guide. In fact, we have found on every trip that a local guide is the best way to experience a new city or culture. Imagine a dingy backstreet. Not too savoury in looks. A large roller door in a parking bay. A discrete knock and you are admitted into a baronial interior where fine food is served. Or perhaps it might be one of the city's famous techno clubs. Or perhaps a vampire den. Yes, the latter does exist and there is a huge subculture for every kind of fetish and indulgence you might be drawn to. But you need to have a local to show you.

MEXICO

The Southern hemisphere is as full of surprises as Europe or Asia. Friends of ours simply adore Mexico. Forget what you see in the movies. Mexico City is a vibrant, cosmopolitan melting pot with incredible food and gay nightlife to rival anything north of the border. Our intrepid friends swear by misterbnb – the gay version of airbnb. Their tales of the delights of Mexico has certainly piqued my interest and having had such a fabulous time in Buenos Aires, I'd welcome a return trip to South America.

Whether one takes the time to learn a greeting in a foreign tongue – like *namaste* in India that literally means; "I bow to the divine in you"; or the Thai greeting used any time of the day: men say hello with *sah wah dee khrap* (short and sharp finish), while women say hello with *sah wah dee khaa...* (drawn out finish), delving into a foreign culture is truly a balm for the soul.

It is often these small, yet surprising cultural differences that make travelling abroad so enjoyable for me. And until we can once again join our fellow carbon criminals in the skies, I'll dream of far-flung destinations and all the sights that might lie in wait.

And, if you manage to sneak in a trip as soon as our borders open again, we wish you bon voyage!

CORAL REEFS ARE FACING THEIR OWN PANDEMIC

According to Jack Kittinger, senior director of the Global Fisheries and Aquaculture Program for Conservation International and professor of practice and Nippon Foundation Ocean Nexus Chair in Arizona State University's Global Futures Laboratory and School of Sustainability, coral reefs are facing their own pandemic. For years, people have compromised the immunity of these ecosystems through pollution and overfishing. Meanwhile, climate change has created a fever in our oceans by raising temperatures and acidifying seas. The resulting outbreak has decimated approximately half of the world's reefs.

"This devastation is well known. What is less well known, and arguably more important, is that it's not too late to save our remaining reefs. We can – and must – take action to save these vital ecosystems", says Kittinger.

By some estimates, coral reefs provide food and livelihoods for a billion people around the world. They also support one out of every four marine species.

By establishing marine protected areas and more effectively regulating fishing practices, we can dramatically improve the outcomes for our reefs, and ensure that they have a fighting chance to withstand the climate crisis.

By RYAN THOMAS

THE DANCE BETWEEN HUMANS AND ROBOTS

Viruses are the talk of the town these days and with good reason. Despite the significant impact they have on our world, there is still so much we don't know about them. Likely existing since life first appeared on Earth, viruses are not really considered "living" things, although this may depend on your definition of what constitutes life. They cannot exist without a host and as such, cannot replicate without one either. They don't grow or make their own energy and they're not made out of cells. A virus more closely resembles a parasitic robot than a living thing. And this is what makes them so difficult to control. Antibiotics and other medications are useless against them. Vaccines don't actually kill viruses either but rather serve as a training workshop for the immune system. Viruses contain genetic code which they insert into a host cell. Then, using the cell's own gene manufacturing processes, replicas of viral code are made creating new, fully formed viral particles. Eventually, these burst from the host cell, each one capable of infecting a new cell. Before long, a host can be overwhelmed, but usually not before transmitting the virus to a new host. Sometimes errors in the replication phase cause a mutant to develop. These may be more, or less dangerous than the original and can evade detection by a vaccinated immune system. This is one reason why we continuously need to create new vaccines. Ever since we found ways to control some viruses, there have been new ones to contend with, some worse than others. It's likely to be a dance that endures forever.

LAUNDRY PLASTICS IN THE OCEANS

Microplastics (those measuring up to 5 millimetres in diameter) make up almost a fifth of the 8 million tons of plastic that ends up in the oceans each year. Of these, miniscule strands known as microfibers – which largely come from synthetic clothing – are the most common. The worst offender is polyester, which is the most widely used synthetic fibre in the textile industry.

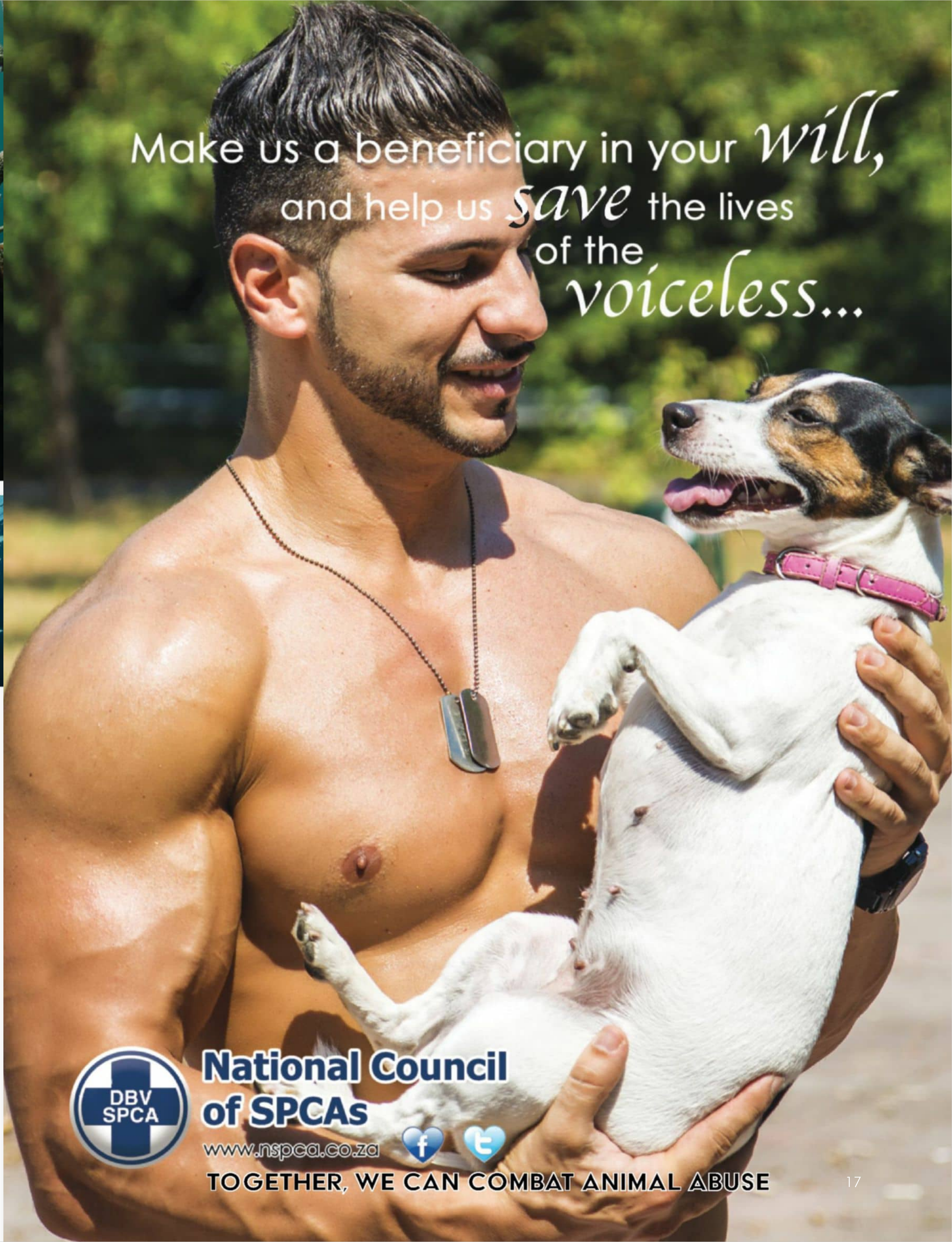
Every time we do our laundry, our clothes shed millions of microfibers. Although wastewater treatment plants are able to catch as much as 99% of them, the rest can eventually flow into rivers, waterways and, ultimately, the ocean.

The fibres have an immediate impact on the microorganisms at the base of the food chain. They are eating plastic, so they don't get the nutrients they need, and they don't develop as they should. This, in turn, affects the health of the whole marine ecosystem.

These plastic particles may eventually end up on our dinner tables. And while there are still many unanswered questions about bioaccumulation – a process whereby potentially toxic particles make their way up the food chain there are worrying signs in the nascent research.

At the root of the problem is a global textile industry that produces more than 40 million tons of synthetic fabrics a year. The vast majority of this is polyester clothing. So, it is ideal in terms of clothing. However, that durability makes it very difficult to degrade.

Cold, quick wash cycles can help reduce our plastic footprint if one only runs full loads and use a high-efficiency washing machine. The use of chemical detergents, fabric softener and stain removers, as well as the synthetic dyes released from clothes during washing, can all have a negative impact on the environment. But cutting down the amount of new clothing we buy may, in addition reducing textile waste, have the added benefit of lessening microfiber pollution.


Make us a beneficiary in your will,
and help us save the lives
of the
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DBV SPCA
National Council of SPCAs
www.nspca.co.za
TOGETHER, WE CAN COMBAT ANIMAL ABUSE

BAD BRAIN GAINS

A recent, small study from Ohio State University indicates eating a single meal high in saturated fats may hamper your ability to mentally focus. Ordering a cheeseburger and fries might literally be a dumb move, new research suggests. Saturated fats are found in red meat, dairy products and tropical oils, including coconut and palm. They can raise cholesterol and clog arteries.

The study looked at what short-term effect a single meal might have and discovered the participants scored 11% lower on a computer test after they had eaten the saturated-fat meal than they had after eating the unsaturated-fat meal made with sunflower oil. In their journal article, the researchers said earlier studies have shown long-term consumption of a high-fat diet can affect thinking skills.

The study doesn't prove foods high in saturated fat diminish your attention, but it does indicate that may be the case.

The study was partly funded by grants from the US National Institutes of Health. The results were published early in May in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.*

SURRENDER YOUR THOUGHTS

We are all aware of the basic benefits of meditation, stress relief, focus, improved moods, compassion, anxiety relief and the list continues for longer than this article allows. But do you know how to meditate effectively?

Take a seat or lay down in a comfortable positon, in a calm and quiet position (avoid doing this in bed, as a quick nap will follow). Set a time limit, it helps to set a short period at first, five or ten minutes is sufficient if practiced on a daily basis. Feel your breath, be conscious and follow the sensation of your breathing as it goes in and out.

Your mind will wander, your attention will leave your breath, when it has wandered then simply focus it back on your breathing. Be kind to your wandering thoughts, do not hold judgement or obsess over the content of your thoughts. Just come back.

When the time is up, gently lift your gaze, pay attention to how you feel and the environment around you, the sounds, and the beauty in simplicity. That's it! You go away, you come back, doing it as kindly as possible.

HIIT ME WITH YOUR BEST SHOT

With the world recovering and elements of normality returning to our daily routine, there are some quarantine fitness trends worth keeping around. High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is a major hit, and has proven to be one of the most time-efficient ways to exercise. HIIT involves short bursts of intense exercises alternated with low-intensity recovery periods. This exercise method has proven to burn 25-30% more calories than your conventional cardio sweat methods, this study was based on a 30 minute session which consisted of 20 seconds of maximal effort, followed by 40 seconds of rest. The HIIT method applies to weight training, running, and biking, but you can build your own routine based on your body goals and needs. Use this efficient method of burning fat, speeding up your metabolism and building some muscle if you are short on time and want to get active.

locker rooms exist so you can show off your new
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CHATEAU DEL REI
CHATEAU DEL REI
CHATEAU DEL REI

BUBBLY IN A CAN

Chateau Del Rei, the stylish sparkling wine in a can, has introduced two new bubblies – because all good things come in threes.

There is crisp and refreshing new Dry, and delightful Semi-Sweet Rosé strutting their stuff next to the original sweet Chateau Del Rei.

Dry is an invigorating bubbly made in a brut style of predominantly Chenin Blanc grapes, and loves the company of sushi, oysters and poached salmon. The vivacious Semi-Sweet Rosé is a perfect serve for any occasion. This lively blend of Muscat, Chenin Blanc and Pinotage with its seductive rosy complexion hits the spot with picnic-style lunches and light salads.

As the ideal wine-on-the-go for relaxed picnics, outdoor movie nights and open-air concerts, Chateau Del Rei is perfect whenever you are in the mood for just a glass or two – you'll never have opened bottles losing their fizz in the fridge.

Expect to pay around R75 for a 6-pack or R14 per trendy 250ml can.

www.chillbev.co.za/chateau-del-rei

BLANC DE BLANCS BRILLIANCE

In a show-stopping moment for the locally produced Méthode Cap Classique (MCC), the Durbanville Hills Blanc de Blancs vintage 2015 was crowned as the World's Best Bottle Fermented Sparkling Wine at the 2020 World Sparkling Wine Awards announced in London.

Beating fierce competition from eight countries around the globe, including France, New Zealand and Italy, the Durbanvillle Hills Blanc de Blancs triumphed over the 45 entries received.

The international panel of judges praised the locally produced MCC as "Pleasantly aromatic, with a good balance of fruit. The bubbles are fine here, which results in a more refined mouthfeel; the body is excellent, and there are complex hazelnut and toasted brioche notes with smooth soily elements."

Blanc de Blancs (meaning "white of whites") is arguably the most elegant style for sparkling wine. With its beautiful finesse and crisp acidity, it makes for a lovely aperitif and is a joy when paired with food.

The Durbanville Hills Blanc de Blancs vintage 2015 is available online from www.durbanvillehills.co.za, www.vinoteque.co.za and fine wine outlets for about R165.

THE NEW WAY TO FUEL YOUR PASSION

New Score Passion is a blast of sparkling passion fruit with a double shot of Guarana for that natural caffeine kick and a healthy dose of B Vitamins. Stay on track and discover the re-energising power of Score when you are feeling drained, pulling an all-nighter or on the beat with friends.

Mix up your Score Passion by adding some fresh fruit for added flavour and turn it into a cheeky mocktail, perfect for any occasion.

Taurine free and big on taste, Score Passion is the ultimate energy drink to help you reach your potential.

It's available in mega 500ml cans in leading outlets selling at around R10 per can.

Check out www.drinkscore.co.za and get in on the action at www.facebook.com/DrinkScore, or @drinkscore on Twitter and Instagram.

500ml
DOUBLE YOUR POWER
SCORE
Passion
SPARKLING PASSION FRUIT FLAVOURED ENERGY DRINK

FINE WINE AND FOODIE FAVOURITES

FAT bastard Chardonnay, the original FAT bastard wine and one of South Africa's favourite Chardonnays, continues to win hearts and fill glasses.

The recently released FAT bastard Chardonnay 2019 is not only delicious: rich and round, fruit driven and food friendly. It is also extremely well priced and a worthy successor to the 2018 vintage which top scored at *winemag.co.za*'s Best Value Chardonnay Tasting last year.

Before you take a sip, appreciate the golden glow of this classic Chardonnay, and breathe in the expressive tropical fruit aromas intermingling with rich buttery notes and undertones of vanilla. Then, take a sip and relish the full and creamy texture on your palate, followed by a fruity intensity. Swallow and savour this lush and alluring Chardonnay, where every sip is followed by an uplifting citrus finish that can only be described as tasting like… more.

Sipping on a glass of chilled FAT bastard Chardonnay is heavenly but enjoying it with a delectable dish specially created to accompany the wine takes enjoyment to another level. Lose the lockdown blues in the comfort of your own home with some full-bodied feasting tips from FAT bastard's favourite foodie friends. For recipes visit www.fatbastardwine.co.za/fat-inspirations.

The FAT bastard Chardonnay is widely available nationally, retailing between R85 and R95 per bottle.

Fat bastard
CHARDONNAY

BAIN'S
Cape Mountain
WHISKY

THE CAPE MOUNTAIN CONQUERER

The James Sedgwick Distillery in Wellington, home of proudly South African Bain's Cape Mountain Whisky, and its Founder Distiller, Andy Watts, both took the world titles as Sustainable Distillery of the Year and World Whisky Brand Ambassador of the Year at the 2020 Icons of Whisky Awards held annually by Whisky Magazine in London. Due to the coronavirus pandemic the awards were released live on social media.

Beating competition from all producers across the globe ranging from Scotland, America and Ireland to Australia, these awards prove that South Africa is at the forefront of whisky making.

The distillery, the only commercial whisky distillery in Africa, has been at the forefront of innovation with state-of-the-art equipment and ingenious sustainability projects. In addition to the recent Icons of Whisky award, the James Sedgwick Distillery was recognised with the prestigious Green Company of the Year award hosted by the BIG Awards for Business towards the end of 2019.

www.bainswhisky.com

WE ARE ALL BORN CREATIVE!

When they named Writer's Block, a creative solution to delineating this single block wine was needed during a period when South Africa's laws prevented single-vineyard designation on bottles. A single block is special because it is a pure expression of that corner of the world for a particular year. It is a description of time, manner and place – a confluence of nature.

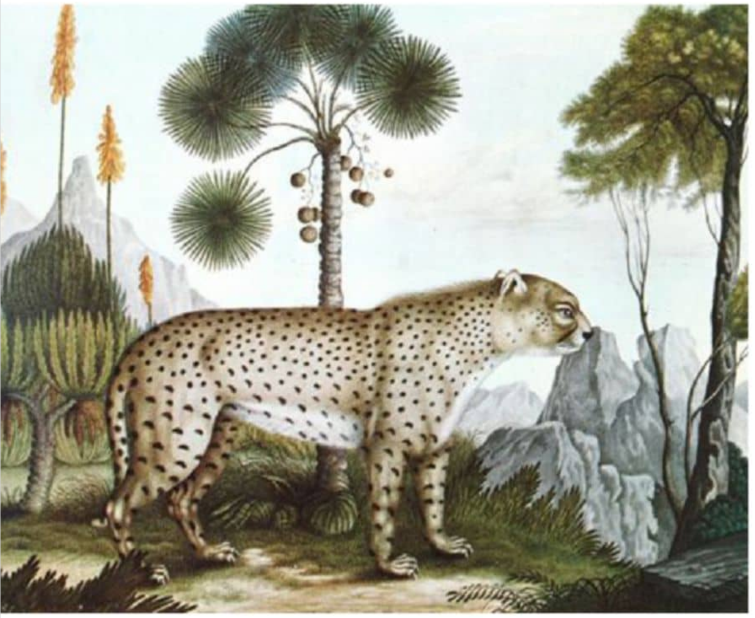
As any winemaker will tell you, making great Pinotage is challenging. It's a temperamental grape known to cast scorn on anything less than the fanatical obsession it demands. Fortunately, head winemaker, Gerhard Swart, is a stickler for detail and is well versed in the annual serenade of Pinotage. Gerhard's enthusiasm for South Africa's signature varietal has seen him crowned a veritable Pinotage King, consistently placing in the ABSA Top 10 Pinotage awards; winning Platter's Pinotage of the Year, and a glitter of stars and medals to adorn the brand's Pinotage bottles.

Available from Norman Goodfellows, Wine.co.za, Flagstone Cellar Door, online at www.flagstonewines.com and selected wine retailers at around R295 per bottle.

By Jean-Pierre de la Chaumette

CREATURE COMFORTS

Décor appears to be in a period of simplicity and softness, probably a reaction to the often 'humdrum gloom' of life at the moment. We're drawn to muted tones, uncomplicated shapes and a sense of familiarity that aids reflection.



THE CURIOUS CASE OF CABO DESIGN

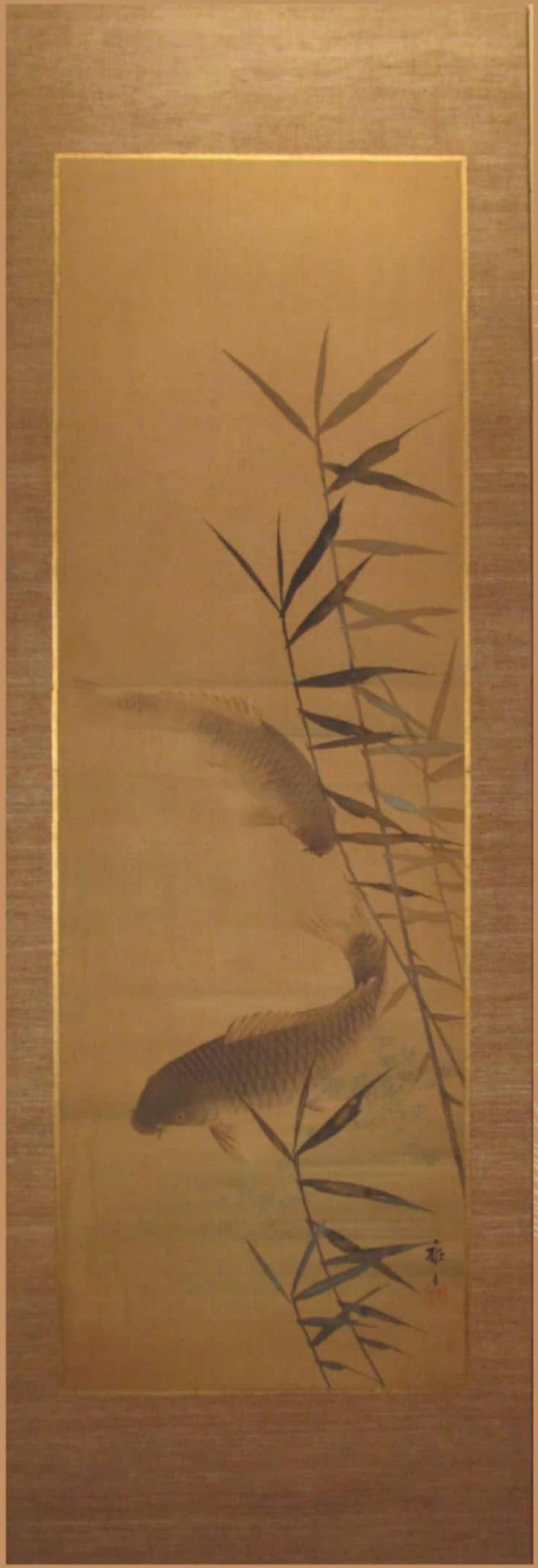
Scratching a creative itch that's been there even after more than 15 years in the interior design industry, Cathy Mill recently launched her vintage print brand called CABO DESIGN. Driven by her passion for the romanticism of the explorers, botanists and artists of yesteryear, CABO is an online curiosity cabinet of hundreds of illustrations. Think tropical birds, fabulous beasts, and unique botanicals. Besides the sheer wonderment of the resource, CABO's printing and framing service is what sets them apart.
www.cabodesign.net

BASKING WITH BOFRED

BOFRED is a Cape Town-based design studio whose latest collection, entitled BASK, is a unique reminiscence of both time and place. Finding inspiration from both the northern and southern regions of the African continent, BASK conjures up a mood of a Muscat veranda or a wide-open room on KwaZulu-Natal Natal's wildest coast. The BOFRED design duo focused on incorporating the shapes, colours and feel of home environments into their creations, with the collection including coffee and side-tables, a chair, and floor and pendant lamps.
www.bofred.co.za

KOHLER´S INHERENT SIMPLICITY

Whilst there's nothing bygone about KOHLER's new PARALLEL tap collection, they somehow evoke a sense of familiarity… 'a modern classic.' The geometry behind the design calls on age-old mathematics, with precisely proportioned circles and squares, that results in a striking interplay of faceted forms. Inherently harmonious with its uncomplicated, no-frills aesthetic, this tap collection speaks to a discerning aesthete.
www.africa.kohler.com



ALAN SAMONS
Oriental Art

Antique, Vintage and Contemporary
Specialising in Chinese and Japanese scroll paintings, Japanese chawan (tea ceremony bowls), kimono, obi and fukusa (gift covers). Selected sculptural pieces from South East Asia also available.

Bespoke Remounting Service
In order to appeal to Western interiors, scrolls and screen panels, as well as textiles, are remounted with fully reversible archival glue onto solid panels, thereby retaining their original aesthetic.

Japanese-style Paintings
Paintings and screens on silk or gold-leaf can be custom ordered to suit any interior.

Sourcing
With over 20 years' experience, I am able to source specific items from all over Asia for decorators and lovers of Oriental art and decorative crafts.

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alan@alansamons.com

By appointment
Killarney, Johannesburg

Two carp swimming among reeds.
Ink and light colour on silk.
Japanese – Meiji (1868-1912) or early Taisho (1912-1926).
Rigid mount with silk and gold-leaf border.
R15 000.00

By Shawn Donovan Brett

SWIM WITH SOUND

The Endurance Dive sits at the upper end of JBL's Endurance in-ear sports headphone range, being swimming headphones, the Endurance Dive are IPX7 water-resistant and designed with underwater comfort in mind, using JBL's TwistLock technology to ensure they stay snugly in place at all times.

They have a built-in MP3 player with 1GB of storage, meaning you can store up to 200 songs on the headphones. However, when you're not in the pool they can also connect via Bluetooth to any compatible device. A single touch button on the right earbud allows you to control your music and also enables for hands-free calling.

Expect to pay R1999.

www.jbl.co.za

CYBER SECURITY OUR PRIORITY

Cyber security might not seem like emerging technology, given that it has been around for a while, but it is evolving just as other technologies are. That's in part because threats are constantly new. The malevolent hackers who are trying to illegally access data are not going to give up any time soon, and they will continue to find ways to get through even the toughest security measures. It's also in part because new technology is being adapted to enhance security. As long as we have hackers, we will have cyber security as an emerging technology because it will constantly evolve to defend against those hackers.

As proof of the strong need for cyber security professionals, the number of cyber security jobs is growing three times faster than other tech jobs. However, we're falling short when it comes to filling those jobs. As a result, it's predicted that we will have 3.5 million unfilled cyber security jobs by 2021.

BOSE CONTINUES TO BOAST THE MOST

We all have multiple sunnies for various occassions and events, Bose have just added a new category to our lives: sunglasses that double as wireless headphones. Each arm has a tiny little Bose speaker system planted in the arms of the glasses that fires right into your ear-holes and just about nowhere else. The Frames are also the first product to feature Bose AR, the audio company's augmented reality (AR) platform. There are a few apps available thus far but Bose hopes to increase their number and usefulness over time. The Frame will pair with your smartphone, just like any other Bluetooth 'phones, and you can stream your audio from your device. Calls can be taken through the specs, and you can chat to Siri or Google Assistant, depending on which side you favour.

Expect to pay R3000.

www.bose.co.za

Q PLUS
THINK
OUTSIDE
THE BOX
WWW.QPLUS.CO.ZA

by RUBIN VAN NIEKERK

TOYOTA COROLLA SEDAN AND FAMILY

Being the world's top selling car is an impressive accolade, especially if this 12th generation model is 54 years old and one of the most recognisable household names globally.

After sampling the new Corolla sedan which is the flagship of a family of vehicles, I requested a retest of the Quest in order to better understand the vast range of differences between siblings, which tick all the boxes from a consumer's point of view. As a self-confessed hatchback fan, the sedan impressed me with technology, comfort and crowd appeal.

Soon all three of our testers became used to this rather unusual crowd response to an extremely hot-looking car with technology to impress our geekiest petrolhead friends. If it were a Supra, we would have expected it, but frankly this Corolla crossed into new territory by creating excitement and a sense of anticipation not achieved before. Not a comforting thought for competitors I guess, as Toyota boasts the biggest dealer network all the way into Africa with superb resale values.

The sedan features a highly expressive design, adopting almost identical front-end treatment as the Corolla Hatch featuring a prominent lower apron, sculpted headlights and flowing three-box design.

According to Ueda-san, Corolla Chief Engineer: "One of the big merits of the new platform is that it allows designers more freedom to create a dynamic exterior."

He adds that all variants in the Corolla family are now visually distinctive and feature an individual look with a lower stance and more appealing proportions. "We've also ensured better all-around visibility for the driver by implementing thinner A-pillars and a lowered dashboard and bonnet," said Ueda-san.

A short roofline and sloping C-pillar convey a sense of motion, while the short rear overhang suggests dynamism underscored by compact LED taillights in bi-colour design, sharp outer edging, and dark border that links across the rear. This creates a wider and more powerful stance with wider wheels and a rear bumper with integrated aero-stabilising fins, which enhances wheel arch airflow.

Dimensionally the Corolla is 20mm lower, with the bonnet edge sitting 35mm lower and the front overhang registering 25mm shorter.

Eight exterior colours present plenty choice where six of them are new. Celestite Grey, Crimson Red, Moonlight Ocean, Scarlet and Dark Blue metallic offer buyers an expressive choice. Pearl White, Glacier White and Satin Silver remain the neutral tones on offer.

The quality feel of the Corolla sedan is like its hatch sibling with slick, understated, yet elegant design, reduced upper-panel height, soft-touch finishes and brushed metal accent strips. The sedan's blue contrast stitching adds an air of sportiness and harmonises with blue illumination for the switchgear and instrument panel.

Aesthetically pleasing front seat design incorporates a ribbed pattern giving a premium feel to the cabin along with a new-age synthesised fabric called RezatecTM which combines the comfort of fabric with the premium feel of leather. My lasting impression is the solidity of the Corolla sedan where aluminium, high-tensile strength steel and hot-stamped materials have been extensively used, and reduced panel thickness of the doors and roof panel shaved weight and enhanced fuel efficiency.

Body rigidity increased some 60% while a lower mounted engine and seats resulted in superior handling agility, steering responsiveness, and high-speed stability.

Suspension wise, the Corolla range features a MacPherson strut front suspension system, a great new multi-link rear suspension and new shock absorber valve technology. Some geometric changes to the suspension arm and bush structures, ensures quicker shock absorber response with less transmission of shock forces from rough surfaces to optimise high-quality ride comfort.

The GA-C platform itself contributes to the suppression of transmission vibration. The steering wheel pad functions as a dynamic damper to suppress steering vibration, and even the toolbox functions as a dynamic damper to reduce rear floor panel vibration.

More sound absorbing material in the engine bay and a triple-layered dashboard inner silencer minimises the penetration of noise into the cabin, resulting in the quietest Corolla and probably car in its class yet.

Two engines options are available, namely the familiar 1,8-litre that delivers 103kW and 171Nm which uses a '7-speed' Shiftmatic CVT transmission with 7 pre-programmed steps.

A new, 2,0-litre 'Dynamic Force' TNGA engine (as first seen on RAV4) generates a responsive 125kW and 200Nm with impressive fuel efficiency in both manual and '10-speed' Shiftmatic CVT options.

Fuel consumption for the 1,8-litre is listed as 6,2 l/100km, the 2,0-litre manual at 6,5 and finally the 2,0-litre CVT at 6,0 l/100km. These figures proved quite realistic even with my heavy-footed driving style over shorter distances.

The flagship XR model is available exclusively with the new 2,0-litre Dynamic Force engine with a choice of 6-speed manual or 10-speed Shiftmatic CVT and the 1,8 XS serves as the range entry point.

The latest technology includes Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and touchscreen interface and many standard features include climate control with Eco mode, a reverse camera, power seat adjustment, one-touch functionality for the electric windows, keyless entry, tilt and telescopic steering adjustment, steering switches and cruise control.

Two levels of Multi-information Display (MID) systems are utilised, namely a 4,2" display and a large 7" MID system with digital speedometer in the XR variants.

Safety wise all models feature seven airbags, ISOFIX, active electronic safety aids (ABS, EBD, BAS, VSC, HAC) and an impact absorbing bodyshell, while the XR grade has and Bi-LED headlamps.

Toyota Safety Sense (TSS), offers is a full complement of active driver aids such as a Pre-collision system, blind spot monitor, all-speed cruise control, automatic high-beam and Lane Trace Assist, operated via steering switches or the multi-information display.

Model Line-up and Pricing:

Corolla 1,8 XS CVT – R 372 700
Corolla 2,0 XR 6MT – R 412 300
Corolla 2,0 XR CVT – R 425 200

Warranty & Service:

All Corolla models include a 6-services/90 000km service plan with service intervals at 15 000km/12-months. A 3-year/100 000km warranty is also included.

www.toyota.co.za

MERCEDES-BENZ AMG CLA 35 & A 35 TRACK TANGO

By RUBIN VAN NIEKERK

The eyecatching Mercedes-Benz AMG A 35 takes the crown for effortless track performance.

Mercedes-Benz AMG A 35 Sedan

Mercedes-Benz AMG A 35 Hatch

Having experienced all the different A-Class models since 2004 on different tracks and skidpans, the mindboggling technological evolution of this extremely popular compact premium car has been astounding to observe. Last year Mercedes-Benz walked away with the coveted South African Car Of The Year trophy with their futuristic champion amongst extremely tough competitors.

It made history by winning the South African Car Of The Year title as well as its category. Historically a first as categories were just introduced.

As magnificent as the Mercedes-Benz A-Class performed its tango at Kyalami during the 2019 South African Car Of The Year competition, I was recently totally overwhelmed with the technical genius and superb racing performance of the Mercedes-AMG A 35 at Zwartkops Raceway. Getting this gem to misbehave on the skidpan soon turned into a challenge amongst our group of compulsive obsessive petrol heads.

The best-seller success story of the compact cars from Mercedes-Benz began 22 years ago, with the launch of the first-generation A-Class. Since then, 6 million Mercedes-Benz compact cars have been delivered worldwide, 3 million of which were A-Class models.

The new entry-level Mercedes-AMG range opens an epic world of driving performance with the Mercedes-AMG 35 4MATIC range, that presents an attractive entry point into the AMG stable for a younger target audience seeking performance and style. In South Africa, the A 35 4MATIC comes in hatch, sedan and CLA 35 4MATIC formats.

The development of the A 35 4MATIC was integrated into the development process of the new Mercedes-Benz A-Class from the start, therefore was also engineered simultaneously with the A 45 S 4MATIC+, which infused AMG DNA into every relevant detail.

At the heart of the Compact Class AMG range you'll find a 2,0-litre four-cylinder turbo engine that generates 225 kW with 400Nm, the AMG SPEEDSHIFT DCT 7G dual-clutch transmission, the AMG suspension and the variable AMG Performance 4MATIC all-wheel drive. This results in a 0-100km/h sprint time of just 4,7 seconds for the hatch, 4.8 seconds for the sedan, and 4,9 seconds for the CLA 35.

"With its iconic design and agile driving dynamics, the new Mercedes-AMG 35 4MATIC range is an extremely attractive offer for a young, active and lifestyle-conscious target group. These customers define their requirements very clearly: They expect exciting design from their vehicle alongside superior performance and inspiring handling characteristics. The new Mercedes-AMG 35 4MATIC range embodies just this attitude to life – and enables stepping into the fascinating world of AMG Driving Performance in a particularly emotional way," said Selvin Govender, Marketing Director for Mercedes-Benz Cars South Africa.

Motor racing influenced the design of the new range with added characteristic AMG elements to the design idiom of the A-Class, like the radiator grille with twin louvres, the AMG Line front apron with flics on the air intakes, a front splitter and silver chrome trims on the louvres in the outer air intakes.

The sporty interior has many sophisticated details, including the MBUX multimedia system, with its innovative operating and display concept. MBUX replaces the previous COMAND systems, and creates an even closer connection between the vehicle, driver and passengers.

You have a choice of three AMG display styles for the optional fully digital instrument cluster. The striking Supersport mode has a central, round rev counter and additional information presented in the form of bars to the left and right of the rev counter, creating a three-dimensional perspective.

Voice control is activated with the words "Hey Mercedes" and due to AI, MBUX recognises and understands nearly all sentences from the fields of infotainment and car operation.

Plenty of controls on the new generation of AMG steering wheels ensure that you keep your eyes on the road. Built-in Touch Control buttons are a new feature and can be used to intuitively select the displays of the instrument cluster and the multimedia system by means of horizontal and vertical swiping and to position them where you wish.

But ultimately this is all-wheel drive car that thrives when you release the horses but it has too much pedigree to make you resemble Don Quixote on heels. Variable AMG Performance combines the best possible traction with lots of driving fun, with torque distribution infinitely variable to suit the dynamic handling requirements.

Five AMG DYNAMIC SELECT driving programs - Slippery, Comfort, Sport, Sport + and Individual enable a wide range of vehicle characteristics from comfortable to dynamic. They change relevant parameters, such as the response of the engine and transmission. An optional Adaptive Damping System offers three different suspension control modes, ranging from comfort-focused to sporty.

The high-performance braking system ensures fade-resistant deceleration and short braking distances, with 4-piston Monoblock fixed callipers and 350-millimetre brake discs up front, and 1-piston sliding callipers and 330-millimetre brake discs at the rear. The exhaust system features an automatically controlled exhaust flap so depending on the drive program selected, the sound could match your mood.

For those who fancy themselves on the racetrack, AMG TRACK PACE is also available as an option for the new Mercedes-AMG 35 4MATIC range. The virtual race engineer is part of the MBUX multimedia system and permanently records more than 80 vehicle-specific data points while driving on a racetrack. On top of this lap and sector times are displayed, as well as the respective difference for a reference time. After putting in some fast laps, the driver can use the data to analyse and, if necessary, improve their driving skills.

The MBUX Augmented Reality function also allows the ideal line of a stored racetrack to be displayed on the multimedia display or optional head-up display, allowing the driver to improve lap times with a virtual instructor on board.

"The expansion and rejuvenation of the compact car range are key factors behind the sustained market success that Mercedes-Benz enjoys. The Mercedes-Benz brand has also become noticeably more youthful since the introduction of the third-generation compact models," says Johannes Fritz, Co-CEO of Mercedes-Benz South Africa and Executive Director of Mercedes-Benz Cars.

MBUX has new and improved Mercedes me connect services that include navigation functions like emergency braking, On-Street Prediction, Real-Time Information and Off-Street Information, which save time and reduce stress levels when searching for a parking space.

Pricing ranges from R841 000 to R984 800 and includes a 5-year/100 000km Motor Plan.
www.mercedes-benz.co.za

CAR NEWS | By Shawn Donovan Brett

MECHANICAL PRIDE COMES ALIVE

BMW UNVEILS PRIDE WRAP

This year was marked the 50th anniversary of the Pride Month. BMW decided to show its support on Twitter, by unveiling a special wrap on a BMW 8 Series Convertible. The 8 Series was wrapped in a very colorful scheme, replicating a rainbow. The post on Twitter also implied that some more surprises are to follow, saying: "Thrilled to officially unveil our 2020 BMW Pride wrap. Stay tuned to celebrate #Pride with us". Whatever that means exactly remains to be seen, but BMW is known for taking part in such celebrations. Last year the company teamed up with Jonathan Adler for the NYC Pride March. The creator had a white BMW M850i at his disposal to dress up as he liked and his final take on the car included the rainbow theme as well. Also last year, BMW joined forces with CNN and set up a museum, walking people through the history of the LGBTQ+ movement. Let's wait and see what BMW has in store as I'm sure it will be making a mark during these troubled times.

www.bmw.com

PRIDE FOR BENTLEY'S RAINBOW CAR

Bentley Motors partnered with Cheshire East Council for the North West of England's first virtual Pride event which took place on Saturday 25 July. The announcement celebrated three key themes for Bentley: pride in the diversity of its colleagues at the home of Bentley in Crewe and around the world, hope and gratitude as the business begins to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis and ongoing support for the local community. To celebrate, a Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible had been wrapped in a rainbow design showcasing six of Bentley's bespoke paint colours. The car was featured during the online Pride event which could be watched anywhere in the world. Dr. Astrid Fontaine, Bentley's Member of the Board for People, Digitalisation and IT, explains: "We embraced the opportunity to create our first rainbow car, because rainbows are recognised as an icon for the LGBTQ+ community and Pride events which celebrate individuality and take place around the world during June and July". Cheshire East's Virtual Pride featured an eclectic mix of interviews, music, competitions, performances and information supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

www.bentley.com

PORSCHE CELEBRATES GAY PRIDE FESTIVAL

"For a stronger diversity" – this was the motto of countless campaigns surrounding this year's gay pride cultural festival, known in Germany as Christopher Street Day. Porsche also stands up for an open-minded co-existence and bringing diversity to life. "We demand and foster equal opportunities and want to make it possible for all Porsche staff to contribute just as they are, regardless of elements including their gender, ethnic background, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation," explains Andreas Haffner, Member of the Executive Board for Human Resources.

A rainbow flag was flying on the plant's flagpole as a symbol of diversity and tolerance. Passers-by on the Porscheplatz were also able to marvel at a mobile rainbow, made up of six colourful 911 models that had been parked on the square outside the Porsche Museum. Numerous Porsche staff members took a stance of a sporting nature at the virtual Pride Run, running many kilometres in brightly coloured shirts on their own individial routes to demonstrate their solidarity with the rainbow community.

www.porsche.com

A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Porsche presents the new generation 911 Turbo S featuring unprecedented power, driving dynamics and comfort. Available in coupé and cabriolet form, the latest version of the two-door sports car delivers 650hp (478kW). A new 3,8-litre boxer engine with two VTG turbochargers is the beating heart of the car and delivers 70hp (51kW) more than its predecessor. The maximum torque now reaches 800Nm (an increase of 50Nm). The Turbo-specific eight-speed Porsche Doppelkupplung (PDK) cuts the sprint from zero to 100km/h to 2,7 seconds (a decrease of 0,2 seconds), while the top speed is unchanged at 330km/h.

The dimensions of the 911 Turbo S have increased significantly in line with its enhanced driving dynamics. The body is now 45mm wider above the front axle at a total width of 1840mm and 20mm wider above the rear axle, bringing the overall width here to 1900mm. Modified track widths, further developed aerodynamics, and the new mixed-size tyres contribute to its agility and sportiness. The adaptive aerodynamics now include controlled cooling air flaps at the front and a larger rear wing designed to produce even more downforce. For the first time, the 911 Turbo S transfers its power to the road with tyres in two different sizes: 20-inch tyres at the front and 21-inch tyres at the rear. New equipment options further underline the much sportier image of the all-wheel drive 911 ability.

www.porsche.co.za

STAY AHEAD IN STYLE

The BMW Group is opening a new chapter in its history with the unveiling of a pure-electric Gran Coupé. The BMW Concept i4 takes electric drive to the core of the BMW brand and heralds a new era in sheer driving pleasure. The BMW Concept i4 represents a look ahead to the BMW i4, slated to enter production in 2021 as the BMW Group's first all-electric model in the premium midsize class. It provides a whole new take on the dynamic excellence for which BMW is renowned and blends a modern, elegantly sporty design with the spaciousness and functionality of a four-door Gran Coupé – all while generating zero local emissions.

"The BMW Concept i4 brings electrification to the core of the BMW brand," says Adrian van Hooydonk, Senior Vice President BMW Group Design. "The design is dynamic, clean and elegant. In short: a perfect BMW that happens to be zero emission." The drivetrain's standout numbers include a range of 600km, output of up to 390kW, 0 – 100km/h acceleration of approximately 4.0 seconds and a top speed in excess of 200km/h. However, the driving qualities of the BMW Concept i4 cannot be expressed in figures alone. The virtually silent delivery of power creates an entirely new sensation of dynamism.

The design of the BMW Concept i4 shows fantastic proportions, a powerfully expressive character and a lot of attention to detail.

www.bmw.co.za

EUROPEAN CAR OF THE YEAR 2020

European Car of the Year 2020, the all-new PEUGEOT 208 rewrites the book in the B segment. It is available with either an electric engine or an internal combustion engine.

Its exterior design embodies the DNA of the Brand with the 3-claw LED front headlights. The Peugeot i-Cockpit (head-up display, compact steering wheel and touchscreen) innovates with a 3D digital cluster, which is not only aesthetic, but also improves safety.

Nearly 110 000 customers have ordered the new Peugeot 208 since its launch in Europe in October 2019, with 15% of the mix being electric versions.

Peugeot has entered the top 3 brands with the most awards in the Car of the Year history, with six trophies.

We look forward to introducing the all-new 208 to South Africa in the last quarter of 2020.

www.peugeot.co.za

ROAD TESTS | By Rubin van Niekerk

Engine	Turbo Diesel 6-Cylinder V6 2967 cc
Power	190 kW @ 3250-4250 rpm
Torque	600 Nm @ 2250-3250 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 6,1 seconds
Top Speed	235 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	8,2 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	810-1800 lt
Turning Circle	12,1 m
Ground Clearance	208 mm
Weight	1930 kg
Price	R459 995
3-Year/100 000 km Warranty	
CO_2 Emissions	188 g/km

VW TOUAREG 3,0 TDI

Light on its feet with all the connectivity and an impressive fusion of assist, comfort, light and infotainment systems, the Touareg is easy to manoeuvre and quicker than anticipated due to 4-wheel steering. A fully digitalised cockpit with 12-inch display and 15-inch display merge to form a digital operating, information, communication and entertainment unit.

The Touareg has the largest range of assistance, handling and comfort systems ever to be integrated into a Volkswagen and includes an optional Night Vision assistance system. Within the luxurious interior of the Touareg the challenging conditions on the outside of the vehicle are easier to deal with.

A massive panoramic sliding roof adds to the spacious ambiance and the atmosphere can be personalised with 30 light colours whose brightness can be continuously adjusted are available as an option.

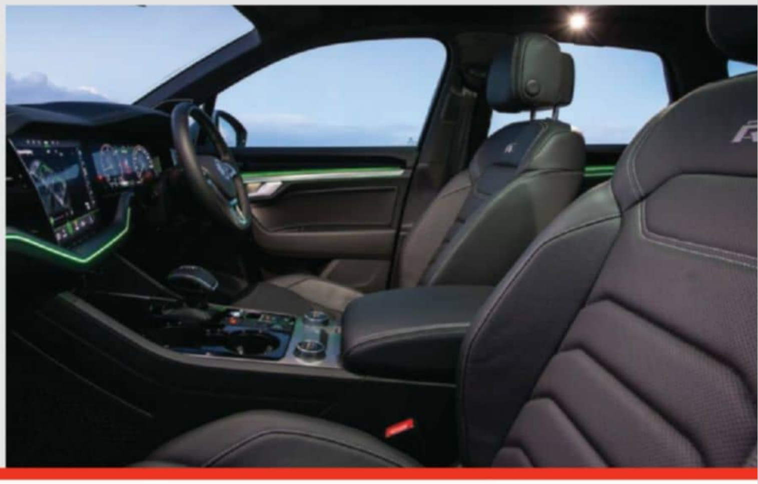
Anybody who has ever struggled with reversing a trailer would love the trailer assist function which eliminates complex manoeuvring with a trailer. As expected this car comes with every form of assistance programmes.

The LED headlights use a matrix made of light spots – individual LEDs that can be activated which means it uses the power of a total of 256 LEDs in the various segments of the left and right headlights at the front to make the night safe and as bright as day.

A corresponding computer uses the signals of the front camera, the digital card data of the navigation system, the GPS signals, the steering wheel angle, as well as the current speed to precisely activate the individual LEDs for the best light in a split second. By switching on the main beam headlight via Dynamic Light Assist the car then does the rest itself like dimming, city lighting, optimum highway light or offroad light.

Great 4-corner air suspension not only perfects the level of comfort, but also the aerodynamics and trips on rough terrain. The new optional air suspension system operates quickly and silently and is insensitive to temperature and outside pressure fluctuations. The air suspension is at the "Normal level" or "Comfort level" as standard. At speeds from 120km/h, the running gear is automatically lowered by 15 to 25mm using the air suspension (deep level) to reduce the air resistance and adjust the driving behaviour.

Offroad parameters change depending on the suspension and the maximum climbing capability (60%) and transverse gradient (35°) are identical with steel and air suspension. The front and rear ramp angle increases with air suspension from 25° to 31°. The breakover angle also increases from 18,5° to 25°. As the ground clearance can be increased with air suspension, the maximum wading depth also increases (from 490 to 570mm). The manually adjustable level of the air suspension is activated using rotary pushbutton switches in the centre console.



Engine	74-Cylinder Inline 1950 cc
Power	110 kW @ 4200 rpm
Torque	500 Nm @ 1600-2400 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 7,2 seconds
Top Speed	223 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	7,7 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	630/2055 lt
Turning Circle	10,6 m
Ground Clearance	190 mm
Weight	1545 kg
Price	R459 995
3-Year/100 000 km Warranty	
CO_2 Emissions	169 g/km

Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross 1,5T

The dynamically well-endowed Eclipse Cross now ticks all the boxes with the fun new ultra-responsive charged engine.

"The new Eclipse Cross was a hit from the word go," says Nic Campbell, General Manager of Mitsubishi Motors SA (MMSA). The Eclipse Cross pioneers Mitsubishi's new, slightly smaller 1,5-litre four-cylinder turbo engine, than the originally launched 2,0-litre. Downsized for efficiency and turbocharged for powerful torque at low-to-mid engine speeds, the newly developed engine is far more willing and able with fleet-footed performance to shame Hermes.

Turbo charging increases power to 110kW that enables standstill to 100km/h in just under 9 seconds in Sport Mode.

Tactile features of the Eclipse Cross 1,5T includes metal paddle shifts within fingertip range behind the steering wheel that adds more charm to the sporty driving dynamics.

Spaciousness in the Eclipse Cross compact crossover with generous headroom and cosseting plush seats belies its exterior dimensions. Getting in and out is easy due to large door openings, a high roof and seats with a reasonably low floor.

A full-size alloy spare wheel still leaves plenty of room for a load of luggage. If you are shorter than 1,85m you will be able to appreciate head-up display (HUD), which reflects relevant vehicle information in full colour on a glass panel above the instrument cluster for easy viewing without distraction.

Apart from the new LEDs and HUD, the sporty and cosy cockpit includes next-generation technology and connectivity, enhancing driver awareness and control, with just about anything you could think of from Bluetooth with Hands-free Voice Control to Electric Adjustable Driver Seat and Heated Front Seats.

State-of-the-art safety features could match any dinner party challenge from owners with far more expensive vehicles.

Engine	4-Cylinder Inline 1373 cc
Power	103 kW @ 5500 rpm
Torque	230 Nm @ 2500-3500 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 8,0 seconds
Top Speed	205 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	6,9 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	350 lt
Turning Circle	9,6 m
Ground Clearance	120 mm
Weight	970 kg
Price	R369 900
4-Year/60 000 km Service Plan	
CO_2 Emissions	148 g/km

Suzuki Swift Sport

The swift is filled with unexpected surprises and presents a spacious hot hatch in heels rather well rather better than a drag queen. It's nimbler than its predecessor and with more immediate, power and has added a modern BOOSTERJET turbocharged engine technology to the range which won the IATIA Engine of the Year Award in 2018.

Weighing in at only 970kg with 103kW means it can claim over 100kilowatt/tonne.

Being lower, wider and longer than before it also looks sportier thanks to a range of hot hatch inspired additions.

A darkened front, side and rear underspoilers create a clear visual distinction from the standard Suzuki Swift, but it also improves the aerodynamics by 10%.

The new 1373cc engine replaces the previous generation's 1,6-litre naturally aspirated engine, with forced induction, and the compact design of the engine has also allowed the engineers to better position the engine for improved weight distribution and a low centre of gravity.

It produces 103kW at 5 500rpm and 230Nm between 2 500 rpm and 3 500 rpm, and it reaches 100km/h from a standing start in just 8 seconds, with a top speed of 205km/h.

An uprated six-speed manual gearbox and a brand-new six-speed automatic gearbox has been both optimised for rapid shifting. In the case of the manual box, the shift action is 10% shorter than before, while tweaks to the clutch profile and a new synchromesh system has been added to give a more positive shift action.

Red and chrome detailing, such as red stitching on the gear lever boot, steering wheel and seats and a special red-to-black gradation on the seat material adds some zest to the luxurious sporty interior.

Suzuki's new 7" touch screen with Android Auto, Apple CarPlay, a reverse camera, Bluetooth and USB connectivity, steering mounted controls and cruise control is user friendly.

ROAD TESTS | By Shawn Donovan Brett

Engine	Turbo Petrol 8-Cylinder V8 3982 cc
Power	470 kW @ 6500 rpm
Torque	900 Nm @ 2500-4500 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 3,2 seconds
Top Speed	315 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	11,3 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	440 lt
Turning Circle	12,6 m
Ground Clearance	116 mm
Weight	2120 kg
Price	R3 245 800
5-year/100 000 km Maintenance Plan	
CO_2 Emissions	257 g/km

Mercedes-Benz AMG GT63 S

The third most powerful AMG that Mercedes-Benz produces has definitely earned this podium standing thanks to its sledgehammer engine. All four wheels are seamlessly powered by a twin turbo V8 powertrain, which produces enough torque alone to keep Eskom out of the dark. Although on the heavy side of the scale, along with a heavy price tag, this AMG brute does not lack any agility or strength when stretching the rev counter needle, it is the equivalent of a body builder who can outrun Hussain Bolt, while carrying him on his shoulders.

The body design has an elegant presence, flowing lines front bonnet to back, yet still maintains a menacing presence with the large aggressive air intakes in the front bumper. A high standard is kept throughout the cabin, alcantara seats, plush leather upholstery on the dashboard and doors, and the very pleasant-to-touch brushed aluminium switches scattered throughout.

Despite it being a high performance sports car, it is supple and luxuriously comfortable when it needs to be. Fuel consumption in mind, it could almost be considered an everyday driver, honestly speaking though, with such striking looks on offer you would drive it every day regardless. Although when driving the GT with a throttle conscious approach, I managed to achieve a fuel consumption of 10,9l/100km, which by sports car standards is easy to live with. As it is a Mercedes-Benz, it is garnished with a superb infotainment system and adjustable digital displays which leave you feeling like a tech addicted teen.

Engine	Turbo Petrol 4-Cylinder Inline 1998 cc
Power	202 kW @ 6000 rpm
Torque	353 Nm @ 1450-4700 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 6,1 seconds
Top Speed	250 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	10,5 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	381-1287 lt
Turning Circle	8,5 m
Ground Clearance	132 mm
Weight	1429 kg
Price	R679 900
3-Year100 000 km Warranty	
CO_2 Emissions	163 g/km

Hyundai i30 N

This high performance Korean pocket rocket really exceeds expectations and distracts any petrol head from any German hot hatch offering. The four-cylinder turbocharged 2,0-litre engine produces a head tilting 202kW and 353Nm of torque, and continues to tickle your torque craving with an overboost function.

The Hyundai i30 N displays some fun and edgy body styling with its flared arches, twin tailpipes and a two tone spoiler which contributes to its hot hatch appeal. The six-speed manual transmission offers the driver an added sporty element, along with rev-matching technology which keeps your accelerator foot satisfied and ready to attack at all times. The cabin has a quality finish with soft touch material, a well laid out infotainment system and heated alcantara bucket seats that definitely keep you firmly in place when putting the i30 through its paces.

Some of the nice-to-haves include a panoramic sunroof, heated electric seats and heated steering wheel, a wireless charging pad, an Android Auto/Apple CarPlay-compatible 8-inch infotainment system and performance-related readouts such as lap timing and a G-force meter

Hyundai has definitely delivered a car that feels intuitive and enjoyable, not to mention grin worth performance results, yet it is easy to live with when going about your daily commute and doing a eye catching school run.

The i30 N is the first performance hatchback to come from Hyundai's N Division under Albert Biermann.

Engine	Turbodiesel 4-Cylinder Inline 1999cc
Power	117 kW @ 4000 rpm
Torque	430 Nm @ 1400 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 9,1 seconds
Top Speed	188 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	11,1 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	743-1826 lt
Turning Circle	12,8 m
Ground Clearance	291 mm
Weight	2248 kg
Price	R1 724 842
5-Year/100 000 km Warranty	
CO_2 Emissions	230 g/km

Land Rover Defender 110 HSE

The household name and an absolute necessity when it comes to off-road motoring, the new generation Land Rover has some enormous tracks to tread in simply because, it has to replace the old one which has dominated the dirt for decades. The first thing you will notice about the new Defender is its modern, soft yet muscular appearance, like a body builder wearing a khaki tailored suit with a full face of make-up. Pretty, but capable. Driving the Defender is a luxurious experience, it does not feel like a hardcore off-roader. Silky air-suspension, solid cabin build and a subtle purr from the popular D240 engine submerged in the bulbous bonnet. The defender initially has a Sandton SUV appeal, until you turn it off the beaten path and onto the gravel gaming grounds, you truly reveal an entirely new mechanical mastery.

The Defender is an effortless off-roader which has the ability to dismiss the challenges of any rough terrain, thanks to its endless list of electronic assists and engineering artistry. The hardware such as the axels, springs, anti-roll, gear ratios, diffs, tyres, traction control systems, speed throttle control and under-body cameras all support your Kingsley Holgate ambitions and intentions. So when your talents fall short, the defender will keep you pointing the correct way up.

The cabin continues to impress with its luxurious finishes, minimalist layout and spacious feel. Land Rover has managed to mimic a Range Rover atmosphere in the Defender, but still managing to instil confidence that a muddy and wet expedition is not going to soil or spoil your exploration tool.

Engine	4-Cylinder Turbo Petrol Inline 1998 cc
Power	225 kW @ 6250 rpm
Torque	220 Nm @ 4500 rpm
Acceleration	0-100 km/h in 4,9 seconds
Top Speed	250 km/h
Overall Fuel Consumption	10,9 lt/100 km
Load Capacity	535 lt
Turning Circle	11,4 m
Ground Clearance	152 mm
Weight	1645 kg
Price	R795 864
5-Year/100 000 km Service Plan	
CO_2 Emissions	153 g/km

BMW M235i Gran Coupé X-Drive

BMW excels at catering to specific niche markets, the Gran Coupé is based on the 2 Series Coupé which until now has only been available as a two-door menace. These additional doors allow you to experience the sultry sportiness it has maintained, but with more friends and family.

The 2 Series has a much bolder presence with the larger kidney grilles and snarling air intakes and the extra length allows for a less-rushed and more elegant silhouette than its divided sibling.

Attention to detail has been paid on the interior, the plush soft touch dashboard, brushed metal finishes and slim digital instrument cluster all elevate the upmarket feel.

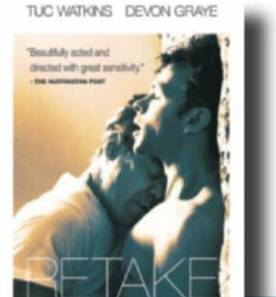
The lively turbo petrol engine is harnessed by the all-wheel drive system which assists in keeping the sprint happy hooligan pointing the right way.

The Sport driving mode not only quickens the gearbox and throttle response, but it gives the exhaust note a throaty baritone charm.

In the M235i, the power flows through an eight-speed Steptronic automatic transmission with an integrated Torsen limited-slip differential standard. With the optional active cruise package, the transmission will gather information from the navigation system and cruise control sensors to "see" the road conditions ahead and make sure it's always in the best gear for the situation that includes dropping into a lower gear when it senses a twisty section of road ahead.

MOVIE REVIEWS | By Leon van Nierop

All DVDs available from www.amazon.com



RETAKE

Starring Tuc Watkins and Devon Graye
Directed Nick Corporon

Fortunately, this is not one of those quickie take-away LGBTQ-movies made on a shoestring budget that have alluring covers that don't live up to its content. Neither is it a self-indulgent prettifying of six-pack self-indulgent boys struggling with gay issues. A businessman hires a rough prostitute and engages in questionable roleplaying while travelling to the Grand Canyon. The rent boy discovers that there is a dangerous and obsessive edge to the journey. This film embodies themes of grief, atonement, falling in love and adapting to a new life. The acting is credible, the tempo brisk, scenes have subtext and the film avoids mawkish sentiment and distracting prettified visuals.

LIKE YOU MEAN IT
breaking glass

LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Starring Phillip Kamer and Denver Milord
Directed by Lucio Castro

This LGBTQ-film had potential which isn't always realised, although the film still strikes some emotional notes. An out of work actor, who suffers from severe mood swings is in a relationship with a handsome guitar player, Jonah. But he is self-destructive and not even a counsellor can save the relationship. The film makes brave statements about moving on once a relationship has taken its course and examines the nature of true love. It also addresses issues of commitment and the nature of adapting to a lover with a self-destructive streak. At times a bit too self-conscious, but watchable.

End of the Century

END OF THE CENTURY

Starring Juan Barberini and Mia Maestro
Directed by Keith Behrman

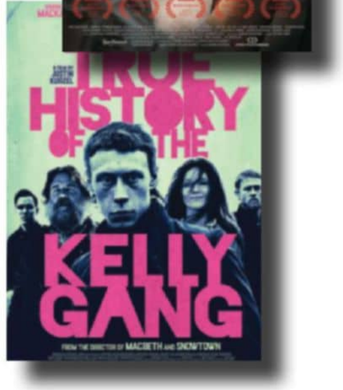
Hats off and condoms on for this electrifying new chapter in LGBTQ-cinema, not without its faults, but so refreshing and ordinary that it finds itself in the same company as the classic *Weekend* (2011). Two ordinary men (not pretty gym narcissists) meet and indulge in an erotic encounter portrayed realistically while avoiding sentiment. One-night stands, mutual attraction, unglamorous though erotic sex leading to an attempt at commitment all feature prominently. After a separation, the lovers meet again twenty years later. This love story contains one of the sexiest dance seduction scenes since *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and addresses whether gay relationships can be monogamous and can last. It examines what could eventually terminate a relationship. A virile and provocative addition to this genre with amazing chemistry between its leads.

KISS ME KILL ME

KISS ME KILL ME

Starring Van Hansis and Gale Harrold
Directed by Casper Andreas

You must be in a *Rocky Horror Picture Show* state of mind to give yourself over to the absolute awkwardness of this camp, muddled mess. Undoubtedly, if you're with friends at an outrageous party and want to indulge in a flat, half-hearted movie with glaring blunders and oversights, this is it. It even indulges in imitating film noir clichés to the extreme. You had to have had a few drinks to survive its awkward directing and messy narrative. A young man, Dusty, breaks up with his dubious boyfriend. During a robbery the ex-lover is killed. Whodunit? The film is weak and lacks coherence apart from being clumsy, exaggerated and reminiscent of bad 1990s TV. Where is Jessica Fletcher when one needs her?



TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG

Starring George MacKay and Nicholas Hoult
Directed by Justin Kurzel

Although this is not strictly speaking an LGBTQ-film, the notorious history of Australia's Kelly gang here gets a homo-erotic treatment designed for the gay gaze. Especially George MacKay, that fine actor whom you might recognise from *1917*, as well as Nicholas Hoult are frequently nude, and their characters indulge in homosexual overtures. Be warned, although stunningly beautiful to look at (the Australian landscape has seldom been depicted as more desolate) it is excessively violent. Charlie Hunnam is especially good as the lecherous and frequently nude Sergeant O'Neil. Brutal and disturbing.

By Jacques Botha | MUSIC REVIEWS

LADY GAGA | CHROMATICA

Probably one of the most anticipated albums this year! After her last two albums that bounced between the experimental *ARTPOP* and then the folk-rock of *Joanne*, she returns with what can only be called a retro journey into 90s House music. There is not a single ballad in sight and will get you up and dancing from the first beat drop. It is amazing how she truly comes to her artistry when she "forgets" to focus on shocking people, but rather just get back to her roots and "just dance". Her duet with Ariana Grande is pop magic and so is her venture into J-pop with Blackpink, but it is really her duet with Elton John *Shine from above* that steals the show!

SILLYGOMANIA

LOIC NOTTET | SILLYGOMANIA

Loic originally made name for himself in *The Voice Belgium* and then coming fourth in Eurovision 2015 with *Rhythm Inside*. He released his solo album *Selfocracy* which received rave reviews from critics (including myself). In 2019, he released a Halloween themed musical play on YouTube that showcases his artistry even more. With his follow-up album, *Sillygomania*, it is clear that despite the flippant album title, Loic has grown immensely as an artist. Like his previous works, there are lots of theatrical elements to the songs as well as the album structure, whilst still staying true to his pop roots. It is also worth checking out his video cover of Sia's *Chandelier*.

KYGO | GOLDEN HOUR

Norwegian DJ Kyrre Gorvell-Dahill returns with his third album to date. He originally burst on the music scene with the killer track *Firestone* featuring Conrad Sewell on vocals. His biggest hit has to be his remixed rendition of Whitney Houston's *Higher Love*, which is also included on this album. The rest of the album plays out with perfect dance music and features guest artists such as OneRepublic, Zak Abel and Zara Larsson. Musically the album stays true to his style of lush beachy melodies that begs for sun and speedos! At only 20 years of age, he is showing the world (just like Avicii) that Scandinavia is the place for good pop dance to be born!

FIONA APPLE
FETCH THE BOLT CUTTERS

FIONA APPLE | FETCH THE BOLT CUTTERS

Fiona is a bit of a dark horse in the music industry, who like Kate Bush and Tori Amos, releases albums when "the mood strikes her". This album took nearly 5 years to record and was randomly dropped during the height of the international lockdown period and begs the listener to really sit and listen. A lot of the album is very experimental and relies heavily on percussion (sometimes non-musical instruments). On some of the tracks, her vocals were recorded mostly ad hoc with very little editing. If mistakes were made, they were just worked into the music. This is an album that musically challenges as tempo, structure and even emotions change within the same song. A masterpiece that really develops like a good red wine!

CHAPTER I
SNAKE OIL

DIPLO | CHAPTER 1 SNAKE OIL

Diplo aka Thomas Wesley Pentz rose to fame firstly as founder of Major Lazer and then as member of LSD (with Sia and Labirinth). His production credits include Justin Bieber, Madonna, Britney, Die Antwoord and Beyoncé to name a few. Interestingly enough, the name arose from his childhood fascination with dinosaurs (Diplodocus). With his sophomore album as a solo artist, he pulls out all the stops in terms of guest artists. The album opens with masked gay artist Orville Peck and then works through artists such as Jonas Brothers, Julia Michaels and Noah Cyrus. The album also includes his remix of *Old Town Road* by gay artist Lil Nas X (featuring Billy Ray Cyrus). The album is fuelled with country undertones but will keep your dancing shoes dustless!

ADAM LAMBERT | VELVET

Adam returns with probably his glammest album to date. It was preceded by an EP called *Velvet Side A* in September 2019 which contained six of the songs contained here. Now in its full 13-track glory, the album cohesively shows the listener a world of glitter, texture, colour and dazzle. Lambert has never been shy to flaunt his gayness both musically and through fashion and this is even more prevalent here. Vocally he is still a genius and continues to push himself both through his high notes, but also his lowest register. The album challenges and rebels ("You try to put me in a box, make me something I'm not"), but overall Adam is the triumphant winner!

By JACQUES BOTHA

THE FRAGRANT MASTER UNLEASHED

It is not often that openly gay artists blow up the music industry with their sheer brilliance, whilst being true to the reality of what it is often all about… isolation, rejection, bullying and raw sexuality.

Michael Alden Hareas was born in Des Moines after which his family moved to Seattle. From an early age he was interested in the arts and studied painting and piano as a child. Even when he was young, he would do mini shows for his family, often putting a towel on his head to represent long hair and then perform Gloria Estefan songs. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Hareas recalls: "I remember that time, around fifth or sixth grade, when everyone started looking at me differently. Even before that, I could tell I was making adults uncomfortable. I originally thought I'd grow up to be a woman." Much of his puberty, he spent in and out of hospital due to the fact he was diagnosed with Crohn's disease.

He came out to his parents at the ripe age of fifteen and as the only openly gay student in his school, he was subjected to a lot of bullying, including death threats. Hareas remembers school as a time where he spent a lot of time standing outside smoking and crying. The bullying was mostly ignored by the school administration and he decided to leave school during his senior year. At this time, he attended Seattle's Cornish College of Arts. His projects were obscure and ranged from VCR parts hanging from a ceiling to paintings made with his own blood and pubic hair.

At age 21, he got attacked by several young men in his neighbourhood while walking down the street. This attack ended up with him being hospitalised. Shortly thereafter he escaped to Brooklyn, New York, to move in with his first boyfriend, and to support himself, he worked as a doorman at a club. However, his dreams of a perfect life, were shattered when he got caught up in drugs and alcohol. He remembers this era as a time where he would lose days on end, not knowing what he was up to. In the end it peaked and he realised he was going to kill himself if he kept going like that, so in 2005, he returned to Seattle and after rehab, started working on recording music. Round about this time, he was introduced to a handsome classically trained musician, Alan Wyffels, who took him to AA meetings and started accompanying him on shows. Needless to say, they became boyfriends. Three years later Michael set up a MySpace account and started sharing his music under the name Perfume Genius.

In 2010, he released his first full length album *Learning*. The album was sparse with just his vocals and a piano. The album was hard hitting and honest: "No one will answer your prayers, until you take off that dress. No one will hear all your crying until you take your last breath," he sings on the title track. The critics raved about it!

He followed up the album up with *Put Your Back N 2 It*. Musically the album was just as simplistic as his debut, but lyrically he took his angst to the next level. The video for the song *Hood* made ripples on the internet. He sits and sings whilst a butch daddy makes up his face, ending in a *Phantom of The Opera*-esque moment of intimacy. Whereas his debut album was telling stories, this album was all about confessions.

In 2014, Perfume Genius unleashed his third album *Too Bright* which was musically far removed from his first two. It was much more confrontational and even tackles homophobia straight up. The song *Queen* made quite a few waves through the music industry, especially with its daunting chorus: "No family is safe, when I sashay". During this time, he also recorded a cover of Elvis Presley's *Can't help falling In Love* for a Prada ad campaign.

With his fourth album, *No Shape*, released in 2017, Michael pushed the envelope even further. Musically the album was a like a rock and roll album, whilst lyrically it was much more free and even aspirational. The album also concludes with an ode to Alan: "It's about how if he truly needed me, I would be there, and that wasn't always true of me." The album has been hailed as a masterpiece and Perfume Genius became a musical magician in the eyes of the industry.

This year sees the release of his fifth album entitled *Set My Heart On Fire Immediately*. The album is largely inspired by his work with choreographer Kate Willich on a 2019 dance piece titled *The Sun Still Burns Here*, with two songs that were featured in the piece (but is not included on the new album). The album cover shows Hadreas topless and covered in dirt, compared to the more androgynous covers of his previous offerings. In an interview with *THEQUIETUS*, Michael says about the cover: "I wanted the cover and the video to have that same thing, where it's warm and nostalgic, but something's not quite right. It's hyper-masculine, but there's something off about it." In an interview with *The New Yorker* he expands on the theme: "I used to just wear huge clothes in real life – just, like, a big tent, with just my little face at the top. But, then, onstage, I would not be wearing a shirt. For an hour, it was, like, well, fuck you, whatever makes me think that I need to wear the tent. I'm going to take my shirt off. I was still anxious about performing, still shy, but I wanted to be ferocious. But there was nothing very patient or warm about that."

Musically though there is nothing off or cold about the album and it weaves itself into a blanket of artistry that echoes the emptiness of growing up as an isolated gay boy who was being bullied to the genius that now smiles and dance away the ghosts of the past.

BOOK REVIEWS

Lie With Me
THREE BODIES
Changing a Leopard's Spots
MAVERICK AFRICANS
The Shaping of the Afrikaners
HAMNET
The Precipice
Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity
Toby Ord

LIE WITH ME

Philippe Besson (Author), Molly Ringwald (Translator) | Scribner Book Company | 9781501197888 R401

Philippe chances upon a young man outside a hotel in Bordeaux who bears a striking resemblance to his first love. What follows is a look back at the relationship he's never forgotten, a hidden affair with a boy named Thomas during their last year of high school. Thomas is the son of a farmer; Philippe the son of a school principal. At school, they don't acknowledge each other. But they meet in secret. Despite the intensity of their attraction, Thomas knows it will end. Philippe becomes a writer and travels the world, but he never lets go of the relationship that shaped him.

THREE BODIES

Nechama Brodie | Picador Africa | 9781770107021 | R290

The first body was found washed up on the banks of the Hartbeespoort Dam. Next came the discovery of a grisly crime scene deep underground in Johannesburg, somehow connected to a woman found dead in the Jukskei River. When the body of a third woman is pulled out of the Vaal River, Captain Reshma Patel starts to wonder if a serial killer is at work. When a fourth woman goes missing Reshma and her partner, former police officer Ian Jack, have to figure out who is behind the killings – and to stop them, before they can strike again.

CHANGING A LEOPARD'S SPOTS – The Adventures Of Two Wildlife Trackers

Alex van den Heever with Renias Mhlongo | Picador Africa | 9781770106987 | R290

World-renowned wildlife trackers Alex van den Heever and Renias Mhlongo have spent more than two decades working together, tracking leopards and lions at Londolozi, jaguars in South America and grizzly bears in the United States. Alex shares stories from his life with Renias, including the successes, failures, dramas, laughter, disappointments, and highlights. As they experience numerous adventures, Alex and Renias learn to trust and rely on one another – both to stay alive, but also to forge an unbreakable bond.

MAVERICK AFRICANS – The Shaping Of The Afrikaners

Hermann Giliomee | Tafelberg Publishers | 9780624089087 | R350

Hermann Giliomee, pre-eminent South African historian, dissects the forces that shaped the Afrikaners into an unusual 'maverick African' nation. He analyses long-term forces like the powerful legal position of Afrikaner women, the expanding frontier, and the struggles about race inside the church, along with more recent political history.

HAMNET

Maggie O'Farrell | Tinder Press | 9781472223807 | R340

In 1596, a young girl in Stratford-upon-Avon takes to her bed with a fever. Her twin brother, Hamnet, searches for help. One of the children will not survive the week.

Hamnet is a novel inspired by the son of a famous playwright. It is a story of the bond between twins, and of a marriage pushed to the brink by grief. It is also the story of a kestrel and its mistress; a flea that boards a ship in Alexandria; and a glovemaker's son who flouts convention in pursuit of the woman he loves. It is a tender and unforgettable reimagining of a boy whose life has been all but forgotten, but whose name was given to one of the most celebrated plays ever written.

THE PRECIPICE – Existential Risk And The Future Of Humanity

Toby Ord | Bloomsbury Publishing | 9781526600226 | R445

Oxford moral philosopher Toby Ord explores the risks to humanity's future, from the familiar man-made threats of climate change and nuclear war, to the potentially greater, more unfamiliar threats from engineered pandemics and advanced artificial intelligence. With clear and rigorous thinking, Ord calculates the various risk levels, and shows how our own time fits within the larger story of human history.

A major work that brings together the disciplines of physics, biology, earth and computer science, history, anthropology, statistics, international relations, political science and moral philosophy, The Precipice is a call for a new understanding of our age.

RED SEA SPIES – The True Story Of Mossad's Fake Diving Resort

Raffi Berg | Icon Books | 9781785786419 | R325

In the early 1980s on a remote part of the Sudanese coast, a new luxury holiday resort opened for business. Catering for divers, it attracted guests from around the world. Little did the holidaymakers know that the staff were undercover spies, working for the Mossad – the Israeli secret service.

Providing a front for covert night-time activities, the holiday village allowed the agents to carry out an operation unlike any seen before. What began with one cryptic message pleading for help, turned into the secret evacuation of thousands of Ethiopian Jews who had been languishing in refugee camps, and the spiriting of them to Israel.

THINK LIKE A MONK – Train Your Mind For Peace And Purpose Every Day

Jay Shetty | Thorsons | 9780008355562 | R305

Over the past three years, Jay Shetty has become one of the world's most popular influencers.

In this inspiring, empowering book, Shetty draws on his time as a monk in the Vedic tradition to show us how we can clear the roadblocks to our potential and power. Drawing on ancient wisdom and his own rich experiences in the ashram, *Think Like a Monk* reveals how to overcome negative thoughts and habits, and access the calm and purpose that lie within all of us.

Shetty outlines advice and exercises we can all apply to reduce stress, improve focus, improve relationships, identify our hidden abilities, increase self-discipline, and give the gifts we find in ourselves to the world.

THE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE – How You Already Have What It Takes To Succeed

Ash Ali & Hasan Kubba | Profile Books | 9781788163316 | R275

The world is not a level playing field, but no matter where you are starting from, you already have what it takes to stand out: your Unfair Advantage. We all have multiple unfair advantages in life, whether we happen to be quick, have a talent for maths, a great feel for people or even a large inheritance. An unfair advantage is simply the element that gives you an edge over your competition.

This innovative book shows how to identify your own unfair advantages and apply them to any project.

GARDENING WITH KEITH KIRSTEN

Keith Kirsten | Penguin Random House | 9781432309824 | R350

The fourth edition of this popular title has been given a completely new look, but it remains the same practical illustrated guide that is a must-have for all gardeners. The text has been updated to incorporate more indigenous species, locally bred hybrids, and waterwise plants, in keeping with changing trends that recognize the importance of gardening in harmony with the natural environment.

THE VEGETARIAN SILVER SPOON – Classic And Contemporary Italian Recipes From The Silver Spoon Kitchen; Designed by Astrid Stavro

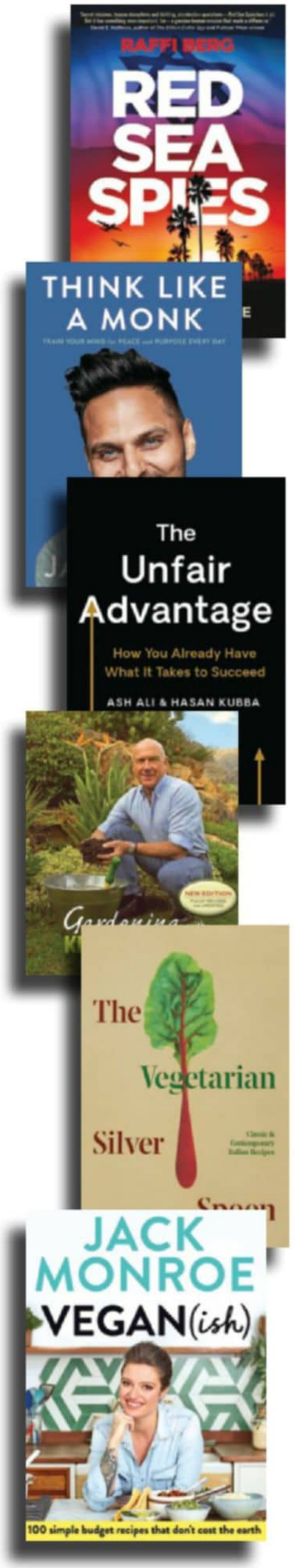
Phaidon Press | 9781838660581 | R1035 (R766 – www.loot.co.za)

More than 200 delicious classic and contemporary Italian vegetarian recipes from the acclaimed Silver Spoon kitchen. The latest title to join Phaidon's Silver Spoon library features more than 200 recipes for Italian vegetarian dishes, with a particular emphasis on healthy meat-free options for appetisers, main dishes, salads, sides, and desserts. Recipes range from classic dishes that are traditionally vegetarian to contemporary dishes that introduce ingredients borrowed from outside Italy's culinary culture. The book is easy to navigate, thanks to its recipe icons, while gorgeous specially commissioned photographs bring its delicious dishes to life.

VEGAN (ISH) – 100 Simple, Budget Recipes That Don't Cost The Earth

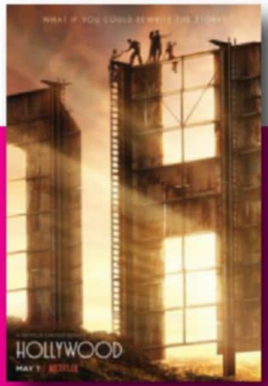
Jack Monroe | Pan Macmillan | 9781529005080 | R400

This full-colour collection of one hundred simple, affordable recipes is perfect for committed vegans or anyone who wants to give vegan cooking a try. Packed with inventive, easy and 100% vegan dishes, this gorgeous book is sure to appeal – whether you are looking to take the leap, want to be a little kinder to the planet, need ideas to cook for a vegan friend, or simply want to put some more plant power in your everyday cooking.

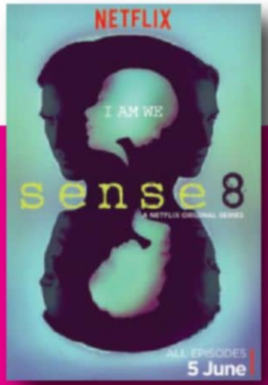

RAFFI BERG
RED SEA SPIES
THINK LIKE A MONK
The Unfair Advantage
How You Already Have What It Takes to Succeed
ASH ALI & HASAN KUBBA
The Vegetarian Silver Spoon
JACK MONROE
VEGAN(ish)
100 simple budget recipes that don't cost the earth

by LEON VAN NIEROP

NETFLIX RATED PG - PRETTY GAY



RuPAUL
AJ AND THE QUEEN
JAN 10 | NETFLIX



THE BOYS IN THE BAND

Politician
JUNE 19 | NETFLIX

Times may have changed, and gay audiences now have a wider variety of gay content to choose from. Netflix provides plenty of LGBTQ films for anybody in search of alternative entertainment outside of the safer mainstream series and films.

Netflix leads the way with the long-awaited Ryan Murphy version of the Matt Crowley-stage play, one of the first "proper" gay films made and a leader in that field in 1970, *The Boys in the Band*. *The Exorcist*'s William Friedkin bravely directed this ground-breaking film stating: "Today is Harold's Birthday…" posing with a picture of a handsome young man next to him exclaiming: "and this is his present…"

It was recently turned into a stage play in New York when it was revived, but was untimely halted due to the Covid pandemic. Now Murphy is giving his special elaborate, flamboyant and ultra-camp touch to this classic story of a group of over the top, but also serious gay men who get together for a party to end all parties.

In the new version all the Murphy favourites reappear, from Jim Parsons to Zachary Quinto to pretty boy Matt Bomer to Charlie Carver (so seriously disfigured in Murphy's *Ratched* (2020) on Netflix.)

And speaking of Murphy: the cute boys just don't stop coming! *The Politician* is now gracing our Netflix-screens and boasts the usual, typical Murphy audacity and razor-sharp wit, starring the cute Benn Platt. It traces the steps of the obnoxious and arrogant Payton Hobart, a student, who is determined to become president of the United States. Well, if not by sheer fearlessness, then he will win by looks and his willingness to experiment with his sexuality.

And speaking of Murphy, his *Hollywood* (2020) is a feast for the eyes, often straying from the truth as it imagines what Hollywood might have been like if Rock Hudson could dare to come out as gay at the start of his career. Jim Parsons played the acid-queen Henry Wilson, through whose bed (and other places!) Hudson had to manoeuvre his way to reach the top.

The series was nominated for many Emmys, yet, unfortunately, walked away empty handed. Darren Criss, so brilliant in Murphy's version of the Gianni Versace murder, *American Crime Story*, (2016) again excelled. The cast also included so many smarty-pants, that a Smartie box might overflow. Compare David Corenswet as the straight Jack Costello and smiling gay icons including Joe Mantello as Dick Samuels and Jake Picking as Rock Hudson. Although taking great liberties with the truth, if you haven't seen Murphy's severe attack on American homophobia and prejudice, watch *Hollywood*. It will tickle more than your fancy!

Moving away from Murphy, the nail on the head *Disclosure* is, according to IMDB, "an in-depth look at Hollywood's depiction of transgender people and the impact of those stories on transgender lives and American culture." Sam Feder directs.

Sense8 (2015) is already in its second season and caused a small sensation. It is well worth streaming. It concerns gender and sexual repression and how resistance pays off. Many trans actors either made their debut in this series or are already well known. Nomi (played by Jamie Clayton) and Buck (Ian Alexander) caught Hollywood's eye. *The Matrix*'s Lana and Lilly Wachowski directed with flair, a sure hand and great passion. The script, and the interlinking of the various story lines, was complicated and difficult, but the Wachowskis pulled it off.

One of Netflix's biggest hits and most talked about and well-known shows is *Queer Eye*. The current reboot shows of the Fab Five in new circumstances and rising the fresh challenges as they provide controversial styling advice. Those makeovers, those dinners! Those colour schemes!

The wine specialist is especially popular (Antoni Porowski), not forgetting the interior designer Bobby Berk, the grooming consultant Jonathan van Ness, fashionista Tan France, and the popular Karamo Brown. David Collins, who originated the show in 2003, is again in charge of the colourful and exuberantly camp reboot.

Netflix boasts more gay content, some of which has been reviewed in *Gay Pages* before, like the exotically sensitive *Alex Strangelove*. Oh, those bewildering days of sexual confusion and identity! Daniel Doheny is picture perfect as Alex Truelove who is in love with Claire. Everything goes hunky dory until sex rears its (ugly?) and confusing head, and our hero discovers that getting under the covers with a girl who demands sex is not as easy as he imagined, especially when he falls in love with the gorgeous Elliot, played by Antonio Marziale. This openly gay kid from the wrong side of town forces Alex to confront his own sexuality and finally make a choice. Not as easy as it sounds!

I am Jonas (2018) is a rather controversial film confronting Jonas at two different stages in his life. In 1997 he is in grade 9 and falls head over heels in love with a new guy. In 2015 the adult Jonas (Felix Maritaud), so brilliant and shockingly handsome and explicitly sexual in *Sauvage* (2017). He confronts some new realities as he is arrested for getting into violent fights, living out his rebellious nature and cheating on his boyfriend. He wants to become whole, to confront his own shortcomings, but there are many obstacles in his path. *I am Jonas* is a highlight on the Netflix movie calendar and is available on the streaming service's South African platform.

I don't think anybody needs prompting to use their overworked remote control to click on a 2016-film called *Handsome Devil* on Netflix. Described as a comedy drama, it concerns a thrilling and deadly combination of that wet dream of any gay boy, a rugby player, and an ordinary guy who share a bedroom at their boarding school. Those longing stares, those noises in the night, those desires… Fionn O'Shea and Ruairi O'Connor give excellent performances.

King Cobra (2016) is the rather explicit tale of a gay pornography producer Stephen (a surprisingly nuanced Christian Slater) who is in constant fights with two other producers over the right to a devilishly attractive underage porn star Brent Corrigan. It is based on a true and very distressing story as it informs what happens when a young, irresponsible porn star gets free reigns and decides to make it on his own. His abuse and the eventual dramatic outcome will have you riveted.

The film was incidentally inspired by a lethal couple (Harlow and Joe) who was shown on the true crime series *Snapped: Killer Couples*, Incidentally, the real Brent Corrigan (real name Sean Lockhart) has publicly condemned the movie. Garrett Clayton become an overnight star after appearing (mostly bare chested) in this film. Also look out for *Pretty in Pink*'s Molly Ringwald. James Franco plays Joe, while Harlow is portrayed by Keegan Allen. This film may upset and will provide lots of discussion and debate.

Holding the man (2015) again explores that age-old theme of a rugby player in love with an actor (this time) who notice each other during a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Wait till you see what Ryan Corr and Craig Scott get up to in unbridled scenes burning with passion and chemistry. What is so remarkable about this film, is that their relationship survived fifteen years of turmoil in real life, until Aids destroyed their happiness and bliss. A timely and attractive yet disturbing and extremely emotional experience.

Call Me By Your Name (2017) needs no introduction and turned Timothée Chalamet into an overnight superstar, with the perfectly cast Armie Hammer as an older (straight?) man, hired by the seventeen-year-old student's dad. They fall in love. A sequel has been in the works, but it has probably been derailed during the Covid epidemic.

Other titles worth giving a try on Netflix include *Last Ferry*, *Death in Buenos Aires*, *I am Michael* and *Love*. Just be aware of the disturbing subject matter of the true story *I am Michael* (2015) starring James Franco and Zachary Quinto, in which a gay activist, Michael Glaze, becomes a Christian Pastor who turns heterosexual with shocking consequences, while *Love* (2015) centres on a weekend trip when two friends realise that they are falling in love. Dhruv Ganesh and Shiv Panditt play the leads. It examines what happens when a Wall Street deal maker and a Muimbai-based producer fall in love.

Lots of queer eye candy for thought on Netflix!

by CIARAN R. MAIDWELL

‘STRAIGHT-ACTING’

Preference or problem? Gay culture’s obsession with masculinity hurts masculine and feminine men alike

From the moment we’re born, men are indoctrinated with ideas about what our gender means: real men don’t share feelings; real men play sport; real men are always up for a fight; they don’t drink rosé. Our culture inculcates masculinity in ways both subtle and overt, through gendered bathrooms and school bullies, at the gym and at home. Importantly, the prevailing narrative in western society still holds that real men are necessarily straight – they have sex with women, they father children. The result of this incessant social conditioning is that every gay man inherits an identity crisis: We must reconcile our sense of masculinity with our failure to conform to its compulsory heterosexuality.

While some resolve the conflict by eschewing gender norms altogether, a surprising number embrace the very rubric they fall short of, striving to embody cultural constructions of masculinity in the way they speak, act, and dress. This formative experience installs an internal policeman in the heads of men, whether they are straight or queer, which says “don’t do this or you’ll look gay”. Among queer men, this internalised homophobia can mean failing to correct a stranger who asks about your girlfriend because you’re too embarrassed to say.

When it comes to sex and dating, it also leads a dishearteningly high number of gay men to reject camp or ‘feminine’ men, often in hurtful and demeaning ways; it leads them to post things like ‘straight-acting only’ as a preference. The fear of displays of feminine behaviour attracting homophobia from the outside world has resulted in homophobia within the gay community.

The idea of the ‘straight-acting’ gay man is generally accepted and understood across the global gay community. As you scroll through Grindr profiles, it’s common to see phrases like ‘no femmes’ and ‘masc4masc’ to describe sexual preferences for and by ‘straight-acting’ gay men. Even if you’ve never downloaded Grindr, you’ve likely heard or even said something along the lines of “I’m gay, I like men. I want a guy who acts like a man.” The implication is that being heterosexual is the same as being manly, and being gay is the same as being feminine. To be clear, it’s not the same thing.

‘Straight-acting’ doesn’t seem to really explain what is meant when someone actually says ‘straight-acting’, because that would imply a gay man who dates and has sex with women, like a straight man. It’s also confusing because no man can in any way be ‘straight-acting’ when having sex with another man – even if he plays rugby directly before and after (sorry, bro). What is really meant by ‘straight-acting’ is exhibiting masculine qualities usually assigned to straight men. Being ‘straight-acting,’ for a gay man at least, is therefore directly related to how convincingly he is able to present traditionally masculine mannerisms.

In this instance, then, saying ‘masc4masc’ is clearer and more accurately descriptive than ‘straight-acting’. That does not, however, make it any less problematic. Aside from the fact that heterosexual men can (and do) enjoy things stereotypically associated with femininity, this kind of thinking is simplistic, reductive and hurtful to the collective mental health of the gay community. Gay culture’s obsession with masculinity hurts masculine and feminine men alike. It feeds the bad stereotype that only straight men can be masculine, that gay men who are masculine are somehow ‘acting’.

When we understand that masculinity is plural and situational - that there’s more than one way men and boys enact masculinities in their daily lives - we begin to understand that masculinity can have no real, fixed-meaning. In fact, most gay men know instinctually that that masculinity is fluid, because they already exhibit a ‘deviant’ form of masculinity by being attracted to men. We’re also adept at code switching – calling everyone at the office bro, and then critiquing runway looks at the weekly *Drag Race* gathering.

Much of this variation in behaviour stems from a desire to avoid negative social repercussions from society, as already mentioned, but gay men also tend to put on their straight face to be more appealing to other gay men. And whether or not gay men individually intend to shun those who are less masculine than they are, if a critical mass of the community expresses a preference for masculinity, it creates a standard. This puts a sexual premium on masculinity (read: muscles, deep voice, likes cars), which puts pressure on gay men to conform, and paints ‘feminine-acting’ men as less desirable sexual partners.

The impact of this ‘preference’ on the mental health of gay men is widely documented – those who are more gender-nonconforming struggle more frequently with self-esteem, and experience higher levels of depression and anxiety. Those who prize masculinity are more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies. A big part of the reason people in the gay community have more mental health issues is not only because they experience high levels of marginalisation from society, but also because of the intense internal pressure to be, look, and act in a masculine way.

Everything considered, you might think “cool, I get it, but I can’t change who I’m attracted to.” Like being gay, who you’re attracted to is not a choice, it’s your preference, and your preference just is. Right? On the contrary, research suggests that the things you’re attracted to are not innate. While it may feel like each of our desires is our own they are influenced heavily by social norms. Our preferences in all things are shaped by society, learnt, copied from those around you, influenced by media, picked up from porn. There isn’t such a thing as a natural preference: Sexual desire and socialisation are linked. We like the things we like because we grew up learning they are good, beautiful, and normal.

We are all products of the societies we live in, and so are our ways of thinking – even what we find to be attractive. We are all imperfect in this way. But we must constantly question the systems of power in our lives. Why do we find certain characteristics to be attractive? What ideologies could have contributed to how we view different things?

So, while dating apps make it easy to enforce gender boundaries, the reality is that desire is messy, complicated, and surprising. While it may be difficult to actively change our preferences, we can at least work to understand them and the impact they have on our own behaviour and mental health, and those of the rest of the queer community.

by RUBIN VAN NIEKERK

HUNTERS, SCAVENGERS AND COCOONISTS

I migrated north 28 years ago from Cape Town instead of south like most sensible people have done in Africa for 500 years. Bidding farewell to my charming HR comfort zone that I succumbed to in Cape Town was not easy, but my sister Denise had just been diagnosed with a tennis ball-sized brain tumour. Life threatening emergency surgery was required and I sensed that my life was about to change permanently. Leaving the safety net of my cocoonist Capetonian lifestyle that incorporated a white picket fence and grey corporate comfort appeared quixotic to my friends. I was in an office on the docks with talkative seals outside, and enjoyed access to research that anybody in HR would dream about. However, my stable five-year old relationship with a good looking twink, was about to reveal some cracks, as maintaining temporary long-distance relationships are usually challenging. My hasty move proved permanent after Denise miraculously survived but needed a long time to recover fully. I joined her company as a financial consultant on a commission only basis (My HR skills scored low on cash value), but I thrived in Johannesburg's buzzing gay scene.

Paradise…, except typically I soon settled into another relationship and founded the first gay business association in Africa named the Family Business. Over 100 members decided that they desperately wanted a gay introduction club, so we created our own gay intro club named Boyz, which grew rapidly, as we did not charge gay business network members or friends. It was an honour to be trusted enough by people who were willing to share their most intimate thoughts and feelings. There was no such thing as TMI and I embraced my new role being a supportive shoulder and keeping secrets that I never desired. It was crystal clear that most people need to love someone and be loved by someone. Ultimately, most of us are romantics at heart and quietly dream forever about love in suburbia with our soulmate. Classical cocoonists. During this phase my relationship suffered and I went back on the prowl, but soon as a serial cocoonist settled for suburbia once more.

Lust, fear of rejection, money and ego tends to hinder our quest seeking true love or a soulmate. Almost everybody wished to experience old fashioned romance over candlelit dinners. As the facilitator though, the emotional pressure to succeed was far more intense than I ever anticipated. My workload was immense, as I had to arrange cabaret shows, do media interviews and assist friends and colleagues in their quest for love. This all happened against the backdrop of a *Gay Pages* that was establishing a name for top quality journalistic standards and global printing credibility.

Nevertheless, I was having fun and unexpected success at matchmaking and shortly learned that sexually active people mostly dwelled in three arenas romantically, namely hunters, scavengers, or cocoonists.

Initially we start our journey as hunters where we simply target our guy, then identify ourselves as keen to establish some kind of a bond with our erm… willing victim. Anybody who has tried this digitally, versus face-to-face knows there is a massive difference between keyboard hunting and the spark of electrifying eye contact in a public space. Hunting is extremely addictive and the older you are when you leap out the closet, the more likely you will find yourself stuck in hunting mode for longer than you should. Adrenaline fuelled short term erotic romance is kept alive with the chemicals, dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin released during a kiss or more... However, these chemicals are quite addictive and shortly sends you forth to find matching hungry lips.

Depending on the mutual sense of urgency, hunters tend to move fast if their goals align in these mercurial liaisons, but boredom typically enters the stage quickly. Unwilling memories serves little purpose in learning to escape this addictive and repetitive loop. The burn rate of these liaisons is extremely high and creates a sense of loneliness with emotional baggage for many. Many men unwittingly become opportunistic or "helpful" observers or simply scavengers, if you insist, and at some point and form an opportunistic middle group that spots opportunity when hunters fail to emotionally develop their male bonding, which usually unravels. Fragile egos, guilt and other baggage compromises commitment to the required reflection needed to understand all the conditional complexities in high paced liaisons. Scavengers may have fled the heat of the game, but they are usually adept at grasping the fragility of hurt egos and could prove remarkable at adapting to changing rules and fluid loyalties. Sometimes just passively following the flow.

Eventually many hunters choose a safer, less competitive space where they become casual observers or mercurial observers whilst taking a break in a shrinking pond of anticipated possibilities in a highly digital world. Sometimes they meet someone's targeted right guy, but convert into cocoonists despite the anger triggered from third parties. Scavengers tend to be sceptical of romance as well as the sustainability of hunting. Being recent ex-hunters mostly, they seldom lose that skilled edge that presents itself at the drop of a hat. They can be ex-lovers, friends or helpful advisors who may trigger a chemical reaction with someone connected to the circle. Their main difference is that they have stopped hunting, but their classic defence is that the chemistry just happened naturally. Friends can fume over these scenarios for years, but move on, as this happens all the time. Mating rituals are complex in sex appeal games, so the stakes to get hurt are usually high.

Many gay men feel uncomfortable with such an intense hunting playground that mirrors war games, so would rather opt for stability in a relationship. However, the hotter the guys, the more likely we are to find scavengers surrounding them, whilst patiently awaiting for the first signs of physical or emotional weakness. Don't be so shocked, as this game is also played brilliantly by straights maestros. Ask any divorce attorney!

We tend to be romantics at heart so the fantasy about the white picket fence is incredibly strong amongst the cocoonists who lean towards serial monogamy or mutually agreed terms. The natural urge to get married or involved has increased radically in gay society. Most gay men have starred in all three roles, but hunters and observers are ultimately doomed to loneliness, if they have never even attempted to embrace their romantic potential and ability to love someone for real. Committed hunters eventually lose their romantic appeal and hunting skills.

People who enter the gay scene young tend to go through these stages quicker. Most importantly they have more opportunity to nurture meaningful platonic friendships with gay men at younger ages as well. These relationships that are not based on opportunism may just be what they need about in their quest for love and romance. Platonic friendships with gay men are incredibly valuable and must be cherished. They offer sound boards to debate the challenging complexity of unconditional love and a supportive circle in our quests for friendship and love. As we age, our unconditional platonic friends become like our family.

Anybody searching for lasting love needs grasp the limits of sizzling sex appeal. It is an illusion that ultimately shatters. That is probably why we have so many bitter and angry beautiful people on the planet. Your heart and your soul outlast your looks that fades fast from your late twenties. Anybody who bitterly clings onto this superficiality will remain sad deep down. We incarnated for a reason and that reason is to embrace meaningfulness and unconditional love.

Hunters can become cocoonists, but cocoonists seldom become hunters again and observers need to learn to trust themselves and others again. Few of us have not played and possibly perfected all three roles, but without emotional maturity and some real and meaningful love, we will remain lonely until our next life.

We must value and nurture our relationships on all levels not just sexual, as the pain and penalties of not doing so always manifests almost immediately and frequently irreversibly so.

Trust your instincts and depth of character is all that matters in any type of relationship.

by ALAN SAMONS

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSE

As a mature white South African gay man, I cannot really speak of the ball culture with any sense of true understanding. But I can speak from the heart. I can speak as a gay person whose first queer family were drag queens. I can speak as someone who was deeply affected by my drag family. And I can speak as a person who was deeply, deeply affected by *Pose*.

In the late '80s, when I burst onto the Joburg scene, the clubs were our homes and fellow gay people were our family. For me, at least, that was true. My childhood wasn't easy – my mum did her best, but I suffered psychological abuse from my father. The highlight of my early adult life was the clubs. In those days, being gay was still very much taboo. Illegal, as well. The only time we could really, truly be ourselves, was at the clubs. My haunt was the Dungeon. It became my escape, and I soon found a circle of friends who were to become my gay family. My sisters.

It was very much a time of segregation, but at the clubs, we didn't feel that. Though there were not many black, coloured or Indian people who made the weekly 'pilgrimage', there were a few and we all enjoyed being free for one or two nights a week. Some of my friends were drag queens and one of them happened to be black. Sadly, we all lost contact over the years, but I still wonder about them all. My drag friends taught me how to be gay, how to stand up for myself, and to a huge extent, how to accept myself.

One of the people who impacted my early life as a young gay man to an incredible extent was a trans woman of colour. Though we were firm friends, our ways parted – one of the few times I 'broke up' with a friend, but her influence is with me still. I adored her and looked up to her. She was wise, devious, frivolous, maternal. In a word, human.

The years went by and I was safely ensconced in my middle-class life. It wasn't until *RuPaul's Drag Race* that my fond memories were stirred again (I'm a huge fan). But then the unthinkable happened. *Pose* hit our TV screens. For the first time, trans and queer people of colour were front and centre. I cannot begin to describe the emotional impact this show has had and I'm sure I'm not alone.

Gritty, amusing, heart-wrenching. *Pose* is EVERYTHING I'd ever wanted to see on TV. And to have a star like Billy Porter raising an elegant middle finger to society by appearing on the red carpet in a velvet ballgown will forever be one of the highlights of my entire life. Finally, the spotlight was on my community. And suddenly queer people were no longer relegated to the stereotypical roles of OTT best friend, prostitutes, and the stereotypical roles they were given. There they were – gay men, trans people, queer people of colour – leading the charge and being the stars. For once they weren't being whitewashed.

It is well known that Stonewall and the fight for gay rights wasn't started by privileged gay men and women living their heteronormative and hidden lives in comfort. No, the people who put us on the road to liberation were the social outcasts – the sex workers and homeless queer people, the drag queens and transsexuals – many of them black or people of colour. Their home, their safe space, was the mafia-owned Stonewall Bar and the clientele was a microcosm of New York's social outcasts and misfits. Rich white kids, Puerto Ricans, blacks and other people of colour. No patron was considered to high or too low and all were welcome.

But the city's police started a draconian crackdown on the gay bars and as things happen in cases like this, a few drag queens and sex workers decided they'd had enough and one night during a raid decided to fight back. These brave souls led the way for all gay liberation. Yet, they were still marginalised. Even today there are many gay men who look down on trans people and drag queens. I have never understood that particular brand of internalised homophobia and never will.

Even in the early days of gay liberation in America, drag queens and transvestites were shunned by gay men. Luckily, they were not to be silenced. The word 'trans' came later. They were 'just' trannies and whores who were felt should shut up and be invisible. At least by the white gay males who thought the fight should ONLY be for gay rights. Luckily for us, firebrands like Marcia P. Johnson and others refused to stay silent. Johnson was one of the prominent figures in the Stonewall uprising of 1969. A founding member of the Gay Liberation Front, Johnson co-founded the radical activist group Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.), alongside close friend Sylvia Rivera. A popular figure in New York City's gay and art scene, Johnson even modelled for Andy Warhol. Known for decades as a welcoming presence in the streets of Greenwich Village, Johnson was known as the "mayor of Christopher Street." From 1987 through to her mysterious death in 1992, Johnson was an AIDS activist with ACT UP.

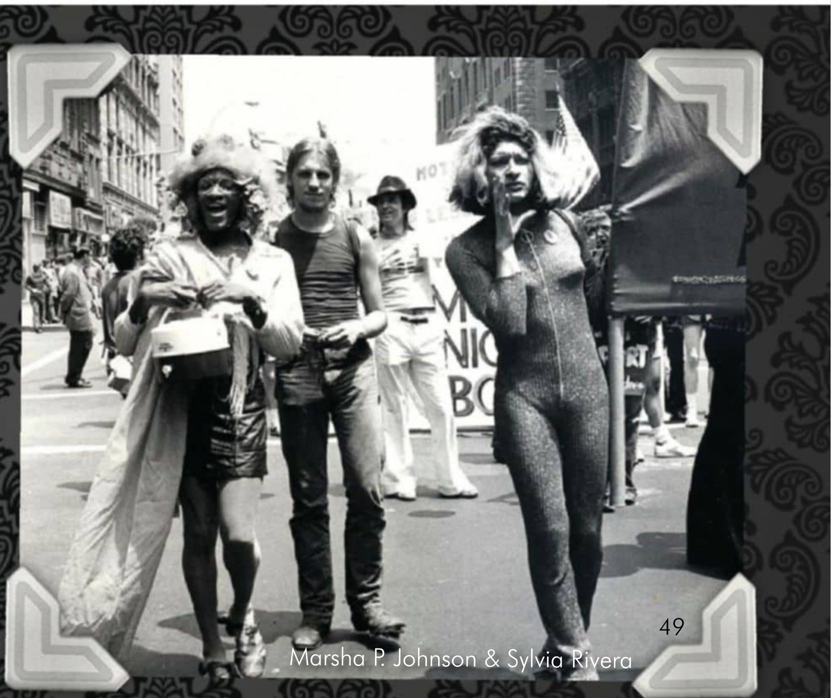
It is vital that our history never be forgotten, especially in the light of the hatred and persecution queer people of all colours across the world face on a daily basis. Protections are rolled back; hatred is preached from pulpits and mosques; laws against homosexuality are made by self-serving politicians; gay men are beheaded or otherwise executed under Islamic Sharia law. Lesbians are raped to 'correct' them. Trans people are being murdered at an alarming rate, especially trans people of colour – and in the USA, of all places. The Land of The Free... Young children end their lives in hopelessness and despair. The threat of physical violence, mental abuse and death hangs over all our heads, even those of us who are considered free and privileged. Until we are all free, none of us truly will be. We don't want special rights; we simply want equal rights. It is that simple and yet the fight will continue for quite some time yet. And its shows like *Pose* that, though fictional (yet with hints at actual occurrences), keeps the flame of history burning.

I'll close with these words from Marsha P. Johnson: "How many years does it take for people to see that we're all brothers and sisters and human beings in the human race? I mean how many years does it take for people to see that we're all in this rat race together."

Billy Porter - *Pose*

Stonewall Riots - 1969

Paris is Burning


Marsha P. Johnson & Sylvia Rivera

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by DAVID VANCE

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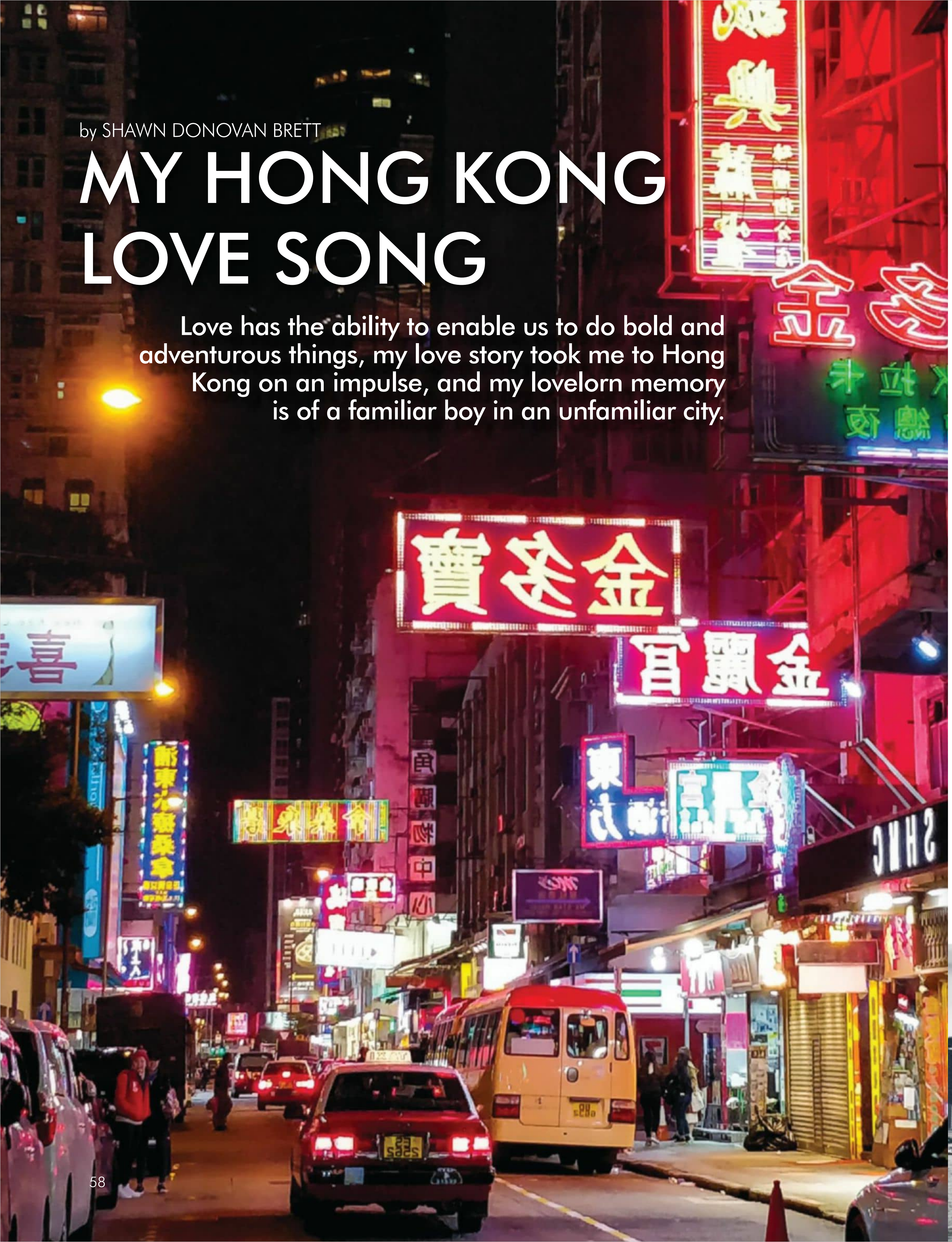
by SHAWN DONOVAN BRETT

MY HONG KONG LOVE SONG

Love has the ability to enable us to do bold and adventurous things, my love story took me to Hong Kong on an impulse, and my lovelorn memory is of a familiar boy in an unfamiliar city.



With 2020 being the year of isolation, I am reminded of two fundamental coping mechanisms to life. Love hard and travel far.

The year was 2016, I was madly in love with this beautiful, free spirited and fun human. We were both in our early twenties and our relationship had started on an impulse, we were both familiar with one another from our friendship circles, but for some reason neither of us ever pursued one another for over a year. Until one evening our circles collided, in a dark and foggy club, our eyes locked in a peculiar way, our lips followed shortly after. It was love at first kiss for me, the chemistry transcended through our bodies, along our tongues and emerged through the kiss. Game over, I was hooked.

Our love developed and blossomed over the months, being young we were quite the wild pair, often spending many hours taking advantage of the nightlife, getting into trouble, exploring one another physically, emotionally, and mentally in every way possible. He was a model, ambitious and ready to conquer the world and make his presence known, I stood cheering and admiring him by his side, until the day the world came knocking. A four-month opportunity had presented itself, an open invitation to expand his career, Hong Kong was calling. Life presented challenges to our newfound love, but none I was not afraid to face by his side.

Before I knew it, we sat side by side at the departure terminal of OR Tambo International Airport, saying our goodbyes and holding back the tears. With any young love the threat of international distance can be daunting, yet we remained hopeful that the time away was for a greater purpose, and our love would prosper.

Two months had passed, and my aching heart craved his presence, I had never travelled internationally before and on an impulse, within two short weeks of minimal planning, I was en-route to Hong Kong. Being young I was a thrifty traveller, picking the most affordable flight which consisted of three layovers and a nap on a terminal floor in a Kenyan airport. How I got to him was unimportant, simply getting there was my main focus, feeling those lips express our chemistry once again was all I craved. Thirty-six hours later I arrived at this dauntingly beautiful new destination, with no knowledge of the city, and a vague idea of where I needed to be, I explored the metro system and made my way to Central Hong Kong where I had booked a stay in the Walden Hotel.

Arriving at the hotel after two metro trips and a joyride with a taxi driver whom I shared a language barrier with, I burst into my room and immediately connected to the hotel's WiFi so that I could share the exciting news with my boyfriend. I had arrived. Within moments he was at my hotel door, our bodies locked in a warm embrace, our lips locked in a love filled kiss too, my heart erupting with joy.

We wasted no time (okay, maybe we wasted a few moments in my newly occupied room) and within minutes were roaming the neon lit streets of Central Hong Kong, the skyline adorned with high rise buildings, the street bustling with cars and people, yet among all the exciting foreign sights, my gaze was most mesmerised by his beauty and warm smile.

We walked the streets for hours as he showed me his new international playground, despite the long tiring journey, I was suddenly energised by the realisation of being in a new foreign city. With my newfound energy we decided a celebratory drink was in order and to our surprise we stumbled upon a cluster of gay bars. My knowledge of Hong Kong's gay community was vague, so this was a familiar surprise and a familiar setting for both of us considering we were drawn to the nightlife. True to our young wild nature, a drink turned into several, and within moments we had made friends with two young holiday makers, Sam from Holland and Keith from Brooklyn. The evening transformed into dawn, yet the atmosphere had no intention of slowing down, the four of us continued on as though we were four lifelong reunited friends. We exchanged numbers and agreed to make more plans in the coming days.

During the day while my boyfriend worked, partaking in castings and shoots, I took the opportunity to explore the city on my own, what was once an intimidating thought had become my newfound expression of independence. My love for Hong Kong was overwhelming. Once again enjoying the excitement of the enthusiastic taxi drivers and the overwhelming subway systems, I had the beautiful opportunity to explore the Ocean Park Resort. My ultimate goal to see a panda bear and its cub was fulfilled, the experience of seeing majestic giants has forever been ingrained into my soul.

The highlight to the trip had occurred one day while exploring the streets with our new friends, Sam and Keith, we had stumbled across what had looked like the tail end of a large street parade. Confetti showered over the sidewalks, streamers clung to traffic lights and the occasional small gay pride flag stuck to the parade barricades. Wait. Did we stumble across Hong Kong's gay pride? We did! Overwhelmed with excitement we rushed to catch up with the crowd. The parade had come to a halt in a large stadium parking lot where hundreds of young community members had joined to celebrate their freedom. The music pulsing through the bubbling crowd, the vendors offering free alcohol and the people expressing their love for equality was a spontaneous experience that gave us a glimpse of the world beating as one, and loving as one.

Two weeks of adventures and mischief had passed by faster than I wanted it to, but the memories of the love experienced, the love my then boyfriend and I grew into together is irreplaceable. Although a few years later we are no longer together, Hong Kong will forever be like a love song to me, when I think of it, hear of it, I think of him and of the love we shared.

I dedicate this Hong Kong love song to you. Forever.

15971466

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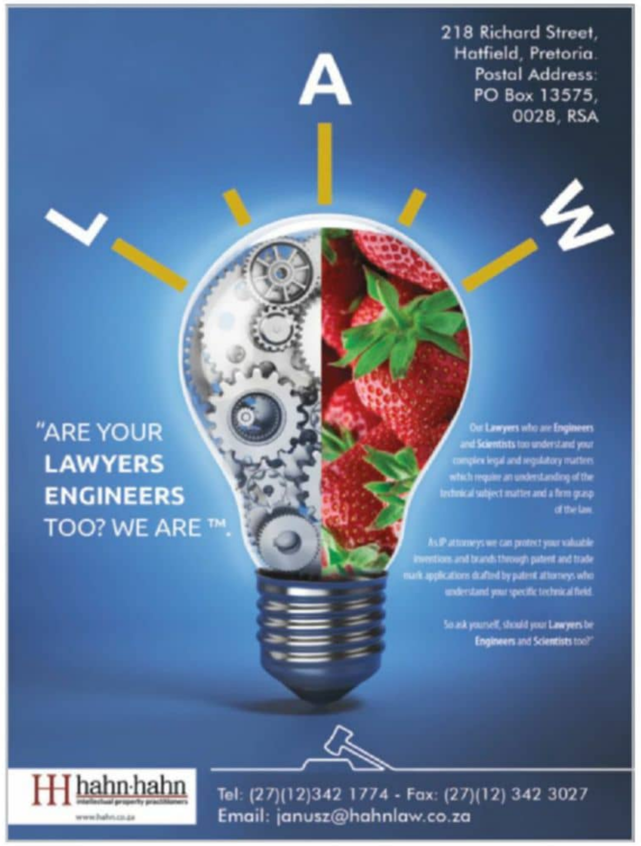

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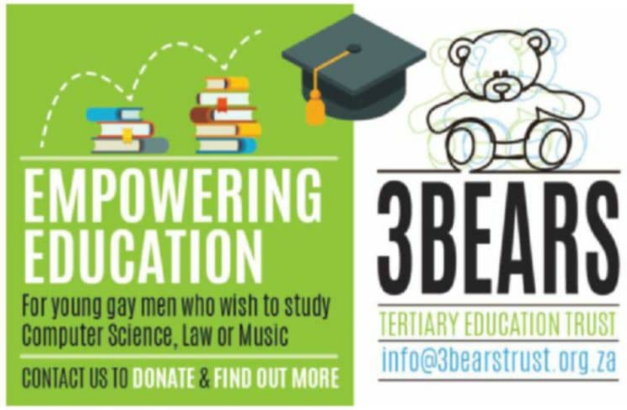

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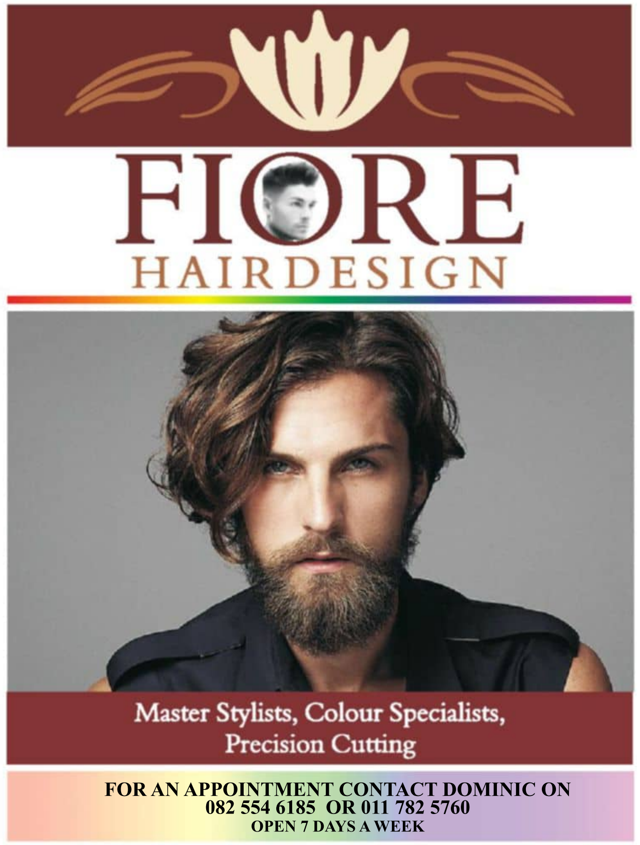

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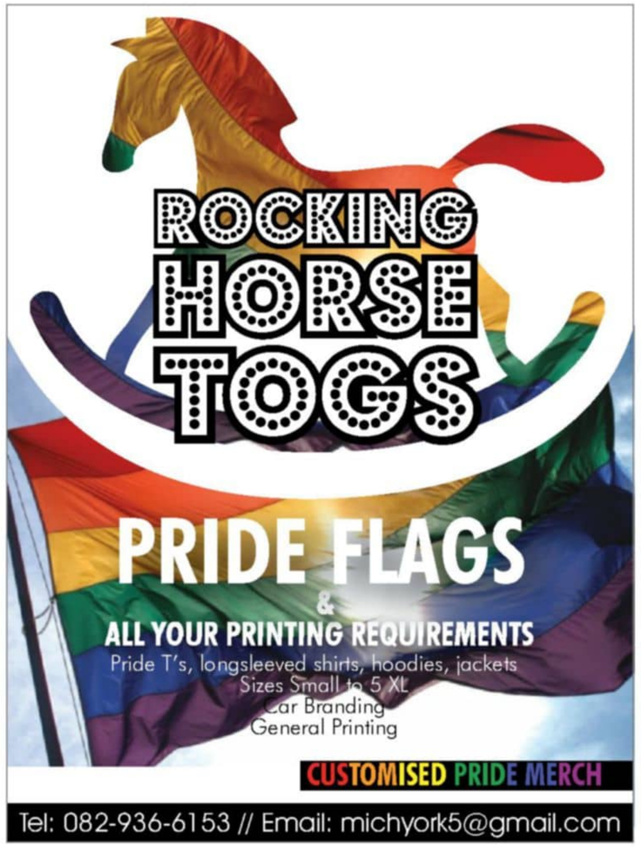

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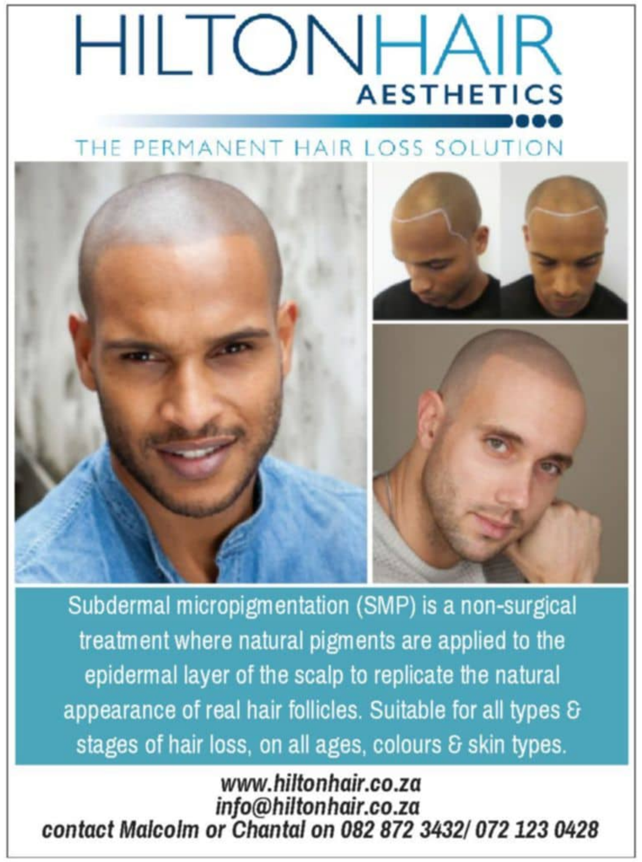

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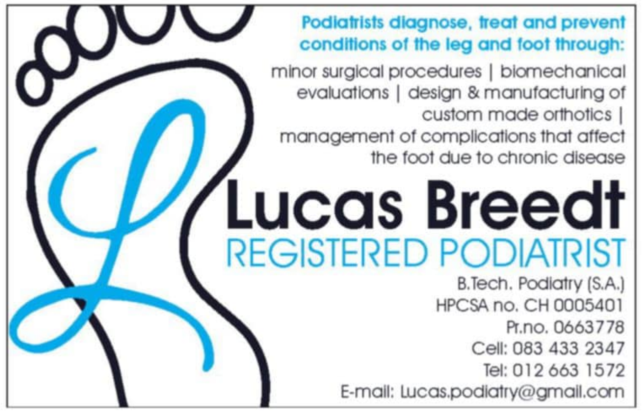

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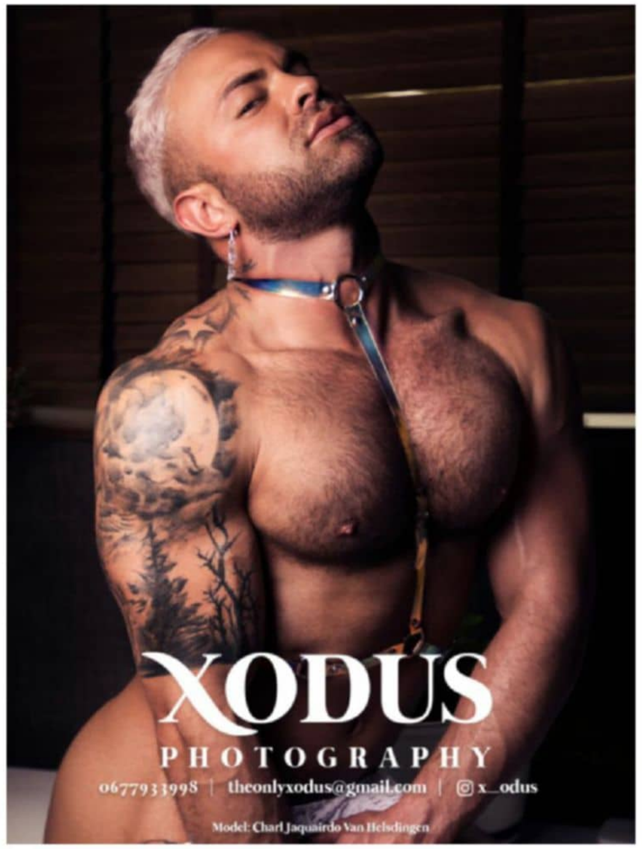
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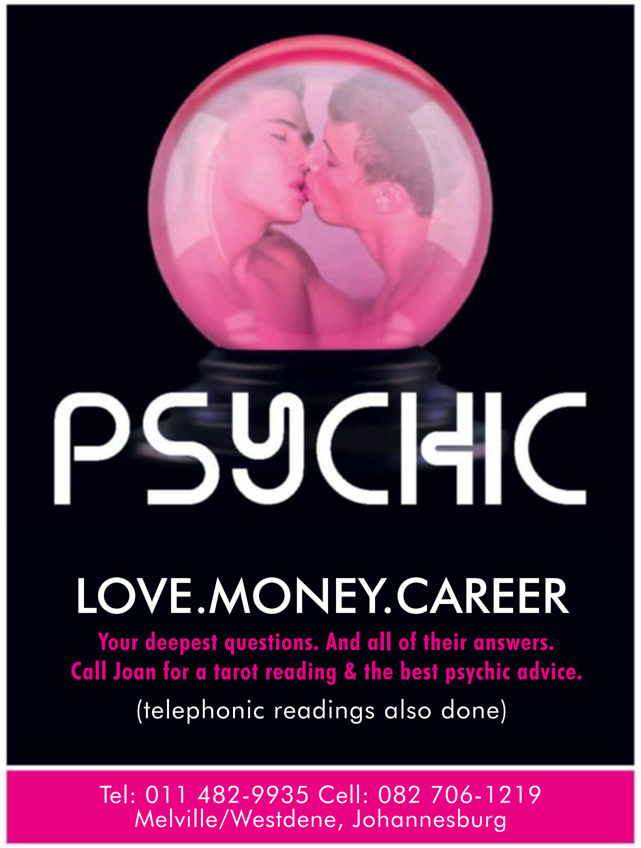

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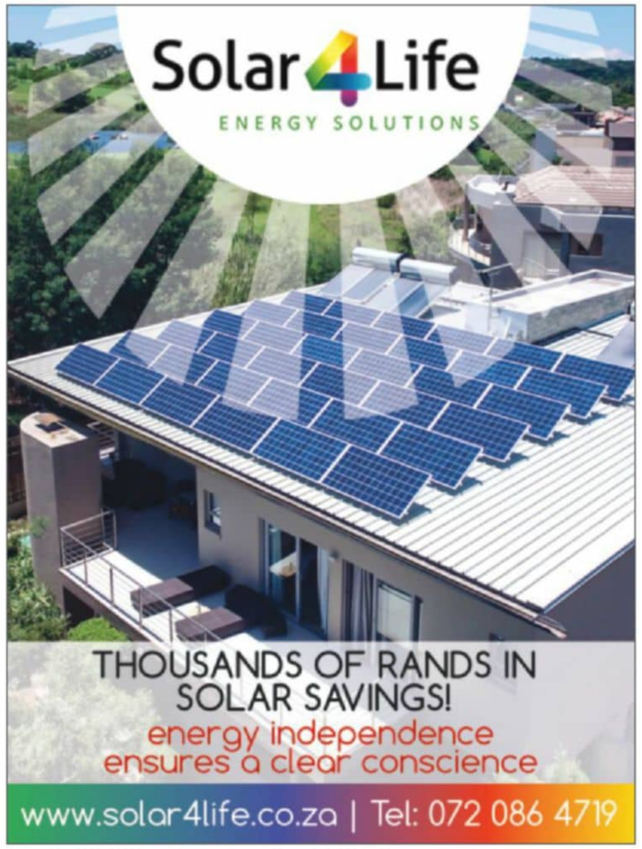

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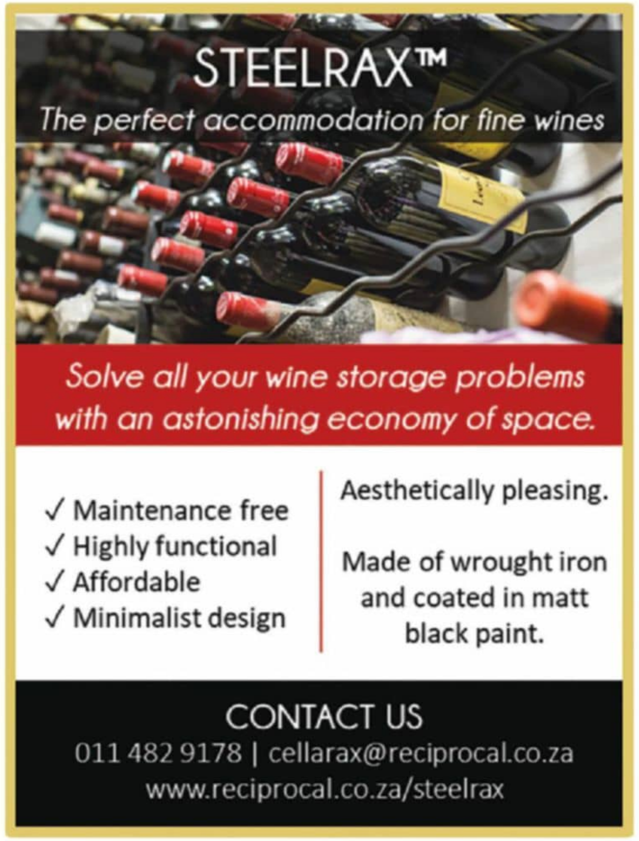

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BOBO'S BRASSERIE | Mouille Point, Cape Town

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On windy days the doorman insists he open the door for you every time and on sunny days the floor-to-ceiling windows are thrown open. The service is beyond exceptional and among the best you can experience in Cape Town.

Diners can expect classically French inspired feature dishes, seasonal specials, and a choice of Chef's plates from a changing menu. For starters you are spoilt for choice but they offer fine oysters, escargot, and dry aged beef tartare with capers. If you get there and their Bouillabaisse is on the menu, it is a definite must; Chef Amber-May Deetlefs outdid herself there. The chocolate fondant is addictive.

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www.1854.weebly.com

THE FUSSY VEGAN | Blairgowrie, Johanneburg

Vegans and people who follow a plant-based diet are fussy. Eating out can be an unpleasant experience when the chef doesn't know how to cook for vegans. Enter The Fussy Vegan. At this unpretentious eatery there is no need to be fussy, in fact, even dyed in the wool carnivores will be pleasantly surprised by the freshness and flavours of the food on offer.

Pop in for a quick sandwich to take to work or sit down to enjoy a more leisurely meal. Everything is fresh and healthy, from the bread, to the burgers, to the cakes. Cakes? If your idea of a vegan cake is something that tastes of cardboard, you will have your mind blown! The Fussy Vegan shows how great this environmentally-friendly lifestyle can be.

Caltex Waterfall, 89 Jan Smuts Avenue, Blairgowrie, Johannesburg.
Open Monday to Friday from 09h30 to 18h00 and Saturday from 10h00 to 14h00.
Tel: 060 716-6029
Email: info@thefussyvegan.co.za
www.thefussyvegan.co.za

LA MADELEINE | Lynnwood Ridge, Pretoria

Nearly three decades have passed since La Madeleine Restaurant opened and its first advert appeared in *Gay Pages* magazine. They took classic French and Belgian tastes and created a relaxed, respectful environment, which remains deliciously constant today.

The eatery takes its name from the shell shaped Madeleine biscuit of which French gay writer Marcel Proust once wrote that it "invades the senses with exquisite pleasure." The same is true of La Madeleine restaurant. Here, they do not have a written menu, rather customers are treated to the personal attention of Chef Leusch who visits each table individually to describe the ever changing specials of the day. They also take value for money very seriously.

122 Priory Road, Lynnwood Ridge, Pretoria.
Open for dinner from Tuesday to Saturday from 18h30 and lunch only on Sundays from 12h00.
Tel: (012) 361-3667 / (012) 348-1249
www.lamadeleine.co.za

BOCCA | Cape Town City Centre

Dining at BOCCA (meaning "mouth" in Italian) is a personal experience, with the chefs presiding over the open plan kitchen and also handling front of house. You feel welcome in this refined yet relaxed environment.

The menu, which you can expect to change four times a year, is creative and full of choices. It starts off with BITES, authentic Italian flavours on small plates. Think *polpo* of Atlantic octopus with potatoes and basil pesto.

It then moves on to CRISPY, *Ortofritto* of zucchini, asparagus and artichokes, or something meaty like *polpettine* meatballs of beef, pork and lamb with mayo verde dip. All these selections are great for sharing. GRAINS, offers you Rummo pasta, made from the best durum wheat.

And, of course, pizza. A definite must. They're nothing like a takeaway pizza. These transport you to Europe and are made using a special technique and a fancy oven. The PIZZETTE section offers even more of a shared dining experience, with smaller pizzas which allows you try more flavours.

As if that's not enough, they also slow roast larger cuts of beef, lamb, curry, poultry and pork overnight. For dessert, under LAST STOP, look out for the fresh lemon curd with chocotale crumble and seasonal strawberries, it will kill you!

The Block, corner Bree Street and Wale Street, Cape Town.
Open Monday to Saturday from 12h00 to 22h00.
Tel: (021) 422-0188
Email: info@bocca.co.za
www.bocca.co.za

RESTAURANTS

FORTI GRILL & BAR | Menlyn Maine, Pretoria

Forti Grill and Bar is the dream of well-known SA celebrity chef Fortunato (Forti) Mazzone. After 22 very successful years at his iconic restaurant, Ritrovo, Forti created a flagship restaurant to a truly international standard. Forti Grill and Bar is an upmarket restaurant with an Italian flair focussed on hospitality and exceptional food. A beautiful and luxuriously appointed dining room and showpiece kitchen offering service and cuisine of a superior standard.
The restaurant seats 100 and includes two private rooms and a full temperature-controlled wine cellar/private room and an elegant bar serving some of the most exclusive drinks in SA. An outdoor terrace offers a variety of seating options.
The restaurant features olive trees, and some of the most exclusive bespoke furniture, art and chandeliers and lighting ever created for a South African restaurant.
The menu has a wide selection of selected free-range meats including the famous marbled Wagyu beef, and fresh fish daily. There is a beautiful pasta bar where pasta is made on order. Clients can watch the kitchen action unfolding through a giant viewing window.
The wine list brings together some of South Africa's greatest wines as well as a fine international selection. There is also a fantastic signature cocktail list.
Italian specialities, wines and Le Creuset cookware are available from the delicatessen.
Forti is a true fusion of exceptional food, great wine, fine art and beautiful music. A true event for the senses.
Top Floor Sun Time Square Casino, c/o Aramist Avenue and Corobay Street, Menlyn Maine, Pretoria.
Open from Sunday to Thursday from 11h45 to 22h00 and Friday to Saturday from 11h45 to 24h00.
Tel: 08600FORTI (36784) or (012) 003-6181
Cell: 083 467-2588 or 076 260-3025
www.forti.co.za

STEF'S TABLE | Hartbeespoort, North-West

There is nothing quite like dining at the home of a talented, passionate cook, and guests at Stef's home-based restaurant are treated to some of the best food to be had anywhere. Service is as personal as it gets, with the hosts paying a lot of attention to their customers.
The à la carte menu offers about six starters, six mains and two desserts, ensuring attention to detail and the best seasonal ingredients. Culinary influences range from South African and French, to Asian and Mediterranean flavours. Stef is a master of the soufflé, so do bear that in mind when placing your order.
The setting is lush and green with an outdoor and two indoor areas, and a cosy fireplace for chilly winter evenings.
73 Scott Street, Schoemansville, Hartbeespoort.
Open by reservation only for lunch from Friday to Sunday and dinner from Tuesday to Saturday.
Tel: (012) 253-2384
Email: stefstable@myconnection.co.za

FIREFISH | Waterfront, Cape Town

The perfect spot to dine after a boat cruise on the V&A Waterfront "sunset strip". Hop off your vessel and enter Firefish, a restaurant built on the art of stylish simplicity in terms of décor, welcoming and attentive service, and of course, unique and considered tastes from the cool Atlantic ocean with a variety of other options.
Have a look at their adventurous cocktail menu. Ask your waiter for suggestions, which might lead you to new ways of enjoying well-known drinks. And do not skip over the starters menu, go for the unfussy fish cake or try the carpaccio of beef.
If you love seafood, their prawns stand out as one of the most uniquely seasoned dishes, and combined with their spiced rice you will be in food heaven. From the grill we suggest the sweet and spicy barbecue baby back ribs. Additionally they offer sushi, lamb and chicken dishes, and vegetarians are well catered for. Among the desserts the iced nougat with salted almonds, sour cream and honey jelly stands out.
Shop 154, Victoria Wharf, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town.
Open Monday to Sunday from 12h00 to 22h30.
Tel: (021) 286-4933
Email: info@firefishrestaurant.co.za
www.firefishrestaurant.co.za

AL PESCATORE | Ballito, KZN

It might be the oldest restaurant in Ballito, but that certainly doesn't mean its stuck in a rut. The owner designs new chef's specials every day and with the unbeatable view over Clark Bay, its easy to see why Al Pescatore has been a firm favourite among locals and visitors alike.
The food is based on Mediterranean/Italian cooking, but a few local favourites can also be found on the rather extensive menu. First choice should be the seafood platter consisting of a selection expertly prepared fresh fish and seafood. If you happen to be dining with friends, a good option would be to order a selection of gourmet pizzas to share. The Cajun chicken, and Thai prawns and calamari are absolutely divine. Carnivores will love the fillet with marsala and if you are vegetarian, there are many superb offerings on the menu. Service is slick and the waiting staff are knowledgeable and attentive.
14 Edward Place, Ballito.
Open from Monday to Sunday from 11h30 to 21h00.
Tel: (032) 946-3574
Email: info@alpescatore.co.za
www.alpescatore.co.za

NV-80 | Sea Point, Cape Town

Named after the dynamic and legendary Gonçalves brothers, Naldo and Victor, who have been in the restaurant industry for 32 years, NV-80 is a throwback to the '80s when the duo began business together. Offering guests intimate indoor dining, an alfresco balcony for sundowners and a chic centre bar, this oasis of a restaurant feels far removed from its shopping centre location.
NV-80 shares a Cuba meets vintage hotel dining room ambience with bright lemon and teal hues set amongst tall palm trees. NV-80's menu is an amalgamation of the Gonçalves' favourites dishes offering tender Chalmar steaks as well as fresh seafood.
The Point, 76 Regent Road, Sea Point, Cape Town.
Open for lunch from 12h00 to 14h30. Dinner from 18h00 to 22h30 (summer) and 17h30 to 22h00 (winter).
Tel: (021) 439-7112
Email: info@nv-80.co.za
www.nv-80.co.za

PIVNUSHKA BEER GARDEN at Hazendal | Stellenbosch

Situated in Hazendal's newly revamped historical Kraal, the Pivnushka Beer Garden is a place for friends, acquaintances, families and colleagues to gather against the beautiful backdrop of Simonsberg and the Bottelary Hills in the Stellenbosch Winelands to make a toast to happiness and health. Expect a novel take on traditional pub fare with a unique German-style open-fire cooking menu with a contemporary Russian and South African twist. Imagine tucking into mouth-watering peri-peri chicken, BBQ lamb, pizzas, bratwurst, fresh salads or something different such as pork shashlik.

The Pivnushka Beer Garden offers a selection of the finest local craft beers and ciders, wines from Hazendal's cellar and an array of virgin cocktails which can be taken up a notch with the help of their master mixologists.

Bottelary Road, Stellenbosch.

Open Wednesday to Saturday from 11h30 to 21h00 (last seating at 18h30), Sunday from 11h30 to 17h00 (kitchen clases at 16h00). In case of rain, the beer garden will be closed.

Tel: (021) 205-5620

Email: bookings@hazendal.co.za

www.hazendal.co.za/beer-garden

SHIO | De Waterkant, Cape Town

Izakaya food has finally arrived on our shores. Shio is Cape Town's very own modern izakaya. In Japanese food culture, an izakaya implies a relaxed dining experience often accompanied by beer or drinks.

Think of it as Japanese tapas and you have the idea – it's all about sharing and sampling various tasty morsels.

Cheyne Morrisby's two other restaurants, Cheyne's and Lucky Bao, have delighted Capetonians for years and now he brings his inimitable epicurean style to the heart of De Waterkant.

Try the oven-roasted kingklip, chilli-salt squid, duck-fat fries or nori-tuna taco, and end with the matcha cheesecake.

The Grey Hotel, 49 Napier Street, Green Point, Cape Town.

Open for lunch from Wednesday to Saturday 10h00 to 15h00 and dinner from Monday to Saturday 18h00 to 22h00.

Tel: (021) 421-1106 or 064 661-7474

www.thegreyhotel.co.za/shio

CAFÉ PICOBELLA | Melville, Johannesburg

This modest eatery has been one of our local favourites for many years. The old house has been given an Italianesque makeover with stone arches, a massive pizza oven and simple interior. The north-facing patio is popular year-round and if your furkids are well-behaved, they are welcome on the patio. The menu is pretty standard Italian fare, but there are a few stand-out dishes, like the beef lasagne and the salmon pasta, but their pizzas are good as well. It's a great weekend breakfast spot. The owner, Dayon, is a lovely man and knows all his regulars by name. If he's in, there will be classical Italian opera on the sound system, which adds immeasurably to the atmosphere. Service is friendly, but a tad inconsistent. Service notwithstanding, Picobella is a home-from-home – and office – for many Melvilleans.

66 Fourth Avenue, Melville, Johannesburg

Open daily from 08h00 to 22h00.

Tel: (011) 482-4309

Email: picobella@live.co.za

SPRINGFONTEIN EATS | Western Cape

Michelin-starred chef Jürgen Schneider serves a four, five, or six-course tasting menu at the restaurant located in a barn on Springfontein Estate.

Only the best and freshest seasonal organic produce is used. The menu is variable and dependent upon what is available. And, since the restaurant is situated on a wine farm, it is advisable to enjoy a tipple made right there. Both the Springfontein Chenin Blanc and the Jonathan's Ridge Pinotage are great options.

8 Wortelgat Road, Springfontein Wine Estate, Stanford, Western Cape.

Open for lunch from Thursday to Sunday 12h30 to 14h30 (last Order 13h30pm). Dinner from Wednesday to Saturday from 18h30 to 22h30 (last order 20h30).

Tel: (028) 341-0571

Email: hospitality@springfontein.co.za

www.springfontein.co.za

UMAMI SUSHI | Kommetjie, Cape Town

Beautifully prepared and presented sushi and succulent seafood is on offer at this delightful venue. The décor is crisp and service is top-notch. Enjoy your meal in the tranquil garden when the weather is fine. A big bonus is that the garden is pet-friendly, so if your fluffies are well-behaved, by all means, take them along.

The farm is simply stunning and offers a wide variety of shops – from organic produce, to interior décor, to art, wine, and cheese. Situated on the route to Cape Point, it's a delightful destination in itself, or great for a stop while exploring the area.

Imhoff Farm, Kommetjie Road, Kommetjie, Western Cape.

Open from Monday to Sunday 12h00 to 21h00.

Tel: 060 504-8036

Email: umamiimhoff@gmail.com

www.imhofffarm.co.za/restaurants/umami

AVANT-GARDE | Stellenbosch

Avant-Garde is the flagship fine-dining destination on Hazendal wine estate, situated in the Bottelary Hills region of the Stellenbosch winelands. It's also a fine stage for showcasing the culinary talents of South African-born executive chef Michélle Theron. The inspiration at Avant-Garde is the fusion of South African and Russian culinary traditions, but don't arrive expecting a humble plate of borscht: Theron and her team offer a thoroughly modern take on this Russian/South African mash-up, with elegant plating, balanced flavours and a contemporary aesthetic throughout. The restaurant space is as eye-catching as the food, with avant-garde artworks gracing the space and glass walls offering a front-row seat to the estate's working wine cellar. The adjoining private dining area is ideal for small groups and family gatherings, with Theron creating bespoke degustation menus for each private function. Alongside this memorable contemporary dining experience, visitors can also enjoy a glimpse into Russia's centuries-old tea culture with the Russian Tea Ceremony, where guests have the opportunity to sample traditional tea alongside a selection of authentic sweet and savoury delights.

Hazendal Wine Estate, Bottelary Road, Stellenbosch.

Avant-Garde is open for lunch from Tuesday to Sunday 11h00 to 17h00, Thursday and Friday from 11h00 to 15h30. Dinner Thursday and Friday from 18h30 (kitchen closes at 21h00).

Booking for lunch at the Avant-Garde Restaurant is essential.

Tel: (021) 205-5620

Email: bookings@hazendal.co.za

www.hazendal.co.za/opening-times-and-reservations

RESTAURANTS

BIRU | Sandton, Johannesburg

Biru is a concept restaurant that incorporates the pleasure of braaing and fine dining together, bringing you an unforgettable experience of fun and laughter and to a certain extent the feel of homemade food right at your table. It is their belief that everyone has a chef within them and they operate on the simple understanding that some people just like their meat done their own way!

Choose your meat from their fantastic selection beef, chicken, lamb, pork, duck, and more. Biru also offers options ranging from seafood and sushi to vegetarian.

329 Rivonia Boulevard, Sandton.
Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11h00 to 14h30 and 18h00 to 21h30.
Tel: (011) 234-2581
www.biru.co.za

FYN | Cape Town

Peter Tempelhoff, Ashley Moss and Jennifer Hugé head up Fyn, one of Cape Town's newest culinary gems. Peter steered the Greenhouse at Cellars Hohenort, among other establishments, to worldwide fame but has now turned his skills to this dining extravaganza.

The cuisine is contemporary, uber chic and will leave you breathless. With the kitchen part of the dining room, this restaurant delivers a touch of theatricality as well. Overall, the ambience is as much part of the food experience.

With more than a nod to traditional Japanese kaiseki cuisine, patrons can expect exciting flavour combinations presented as works of art. Wine can be ordered as a flight to pair with your meal, or from the excellent wine list. Fyn is possibly one of the finest dining experiences in all of Cape Town.

5th Floor, Speakers Corner, 37 Parliament Street, Cape Town.
Open Monday from 18h30 to 20h30. Tuesday to Friday for lunch from 12h00 to 14h00 and for dinner from 18h30 to 20h30. Saturday dinner only from 18h30 to 20h30. Closed Sunday and Monday.
Tel: (021) 286-2733
Email: info@fynrestaurant.com
www.fynrestaurant.com

MASSIMO'S | Stellenbosch

Relaxed, family-friendly dining with both outdoor and indoor seating and warm, friendly service. This is Italian comfort food at its best. Pizzas and other dishes wood fired, and you'll be spoiled for choice – the menu is extensive.

Start your meal with a platter of Italian tapas (spuntini), or create your own selection. The Bomba is fabulous and comprises of chorizo sausage, focaccia pieces, roasted garlic and Italian cheeses and is melted in the pizza oven until bubbling and decadent. Not a calorie in sight!

The pizzas and pastas are equally divine and there is a menu for vegans. Their lasagne is out of this world.

Finish off with home-made Italian kisses and limoncello.

Well behaved dogs on a leash are welcome (inside, in certain areas, and outside) and they have a menu for your pooch.

Oakhurst Farm Park, Main Road Hout Bay Road, Hout Bay, Cape Town.
Open 7 days a week Monday to Friday from 17h00 till late, and Saturday and Sunday from 12h00 till late.
Tel: (021) 790-5648
Email: info@massimos.co.za
www.massimos.co.za

HELLS KITCHEN | Melville

A bit of suburban biker-chic with good-looking, edgy interior and a patio from where you can watch the goings on in Melville. This is the coolest place place to hang out with friends in Melville and get hammered.

The menu is tight, but everything is really great, especially the burgers and beer-battered hake.

Pick your poison from the well-stocked bar. The craft beer list is extensive, and the cocktails are sublime. Now, sit back, relax and enjoy.

Shop 4, 7th Street, Melville, Johannesburg.
Open from Monday to Sunday 11h00 to 23h00.
Tel: 079 980-9591
Email: info@hellskitchen.co.za
www.hellskitchen.co.za

LA MADELEINE | Lynnwood Ridge, Pretoria

Nearly three decades have passed since La Madeleine Restaurant opened and its first advert appeared in *Gay Pages* magazine.

They took classic French and Belgian tastes and created a relaxed, respectful environment, which remains deliciously constant today. The eatery takes its name from the shell shaped Madeleine biscuit of which French gay writer Marcel Proust once wrote that it "invades the senses with exquisite pleasure." The same is true of La Madeleine restaurant. Here, they do not have a written menu, rather customers are treated to the personal attention of Chef Leusch who visits each table individually to describe the ever changing specials of the day. They also take pride in offering you value for money.

122 Priory Road, Lynnwood Ridge, Pretoria.
Open for dinner from Tuesday to Saturday from 18h30 and lunch only on Sundays from 12h00.
Tel: (012) 361-3667 / (012) 348-1249
www.lamadeleine.co.za

MUNDO VIDA | Umdloti, KZN

Seafood reigns supreme at this idyllic restaurant with its prime location on Umdloti Beach. Using the freshest local ingredients, traditional cooking methods underscore the food, but flavours are contemporary and up to date with modern food trends. With the ocean literally on their doorstep, guests are treated to the finest seafood and linefish caught by local fishermen is preferred.

Asian influences are evident in the slow-roasted pork belly with red dragon sauce. The menu also offers pizzas and pastas. And, for those who are watching their weight, there is a good selection of banting dishes to order from.

Attention to detail is evident in the plating (and portions are generous without being too much), and the service is good. The wine list is rather eclectic.

1 South Beach Road, Umdloti, KwaZulu-Natal.
Open for lunch Monday to Sunday from 12h00 to 15h00 and dinner Monday to Saturday from 18h00 to 21h30.
Tel: (031) 568-2286
www.mundovida.co.za

RESTAURANTS

GREEN GABLES | McGregor, Western Cape

Savour a slice of the charm and friendly atmosphere of the Western Cape Winelands at Green Gable Old Mill Country Inn and Restaurant. Situated in a historic heritage manor house circa 1860, the restaurant and terrace offer stunning views over the village and breath-taking Langeberg mountains. Feast on traditional country dishes like: bobotie, Cape Malay curries, homemade chicken pie and pork belly. Food is cooked with pride and lots of love. Put Green Gables on your to-do list when you're in the Cape.

7 Smith Street, McGregor, Western Cape
Open Friday and Saturday evenings for dinners and sundowners on the terrace.
Tel: (023) 625-1626
Email: bookings@greengablesmcgregor.co.za
www.greengablesmcgregor.co.za

BENGUELA BRASSERIE | Sedgefield

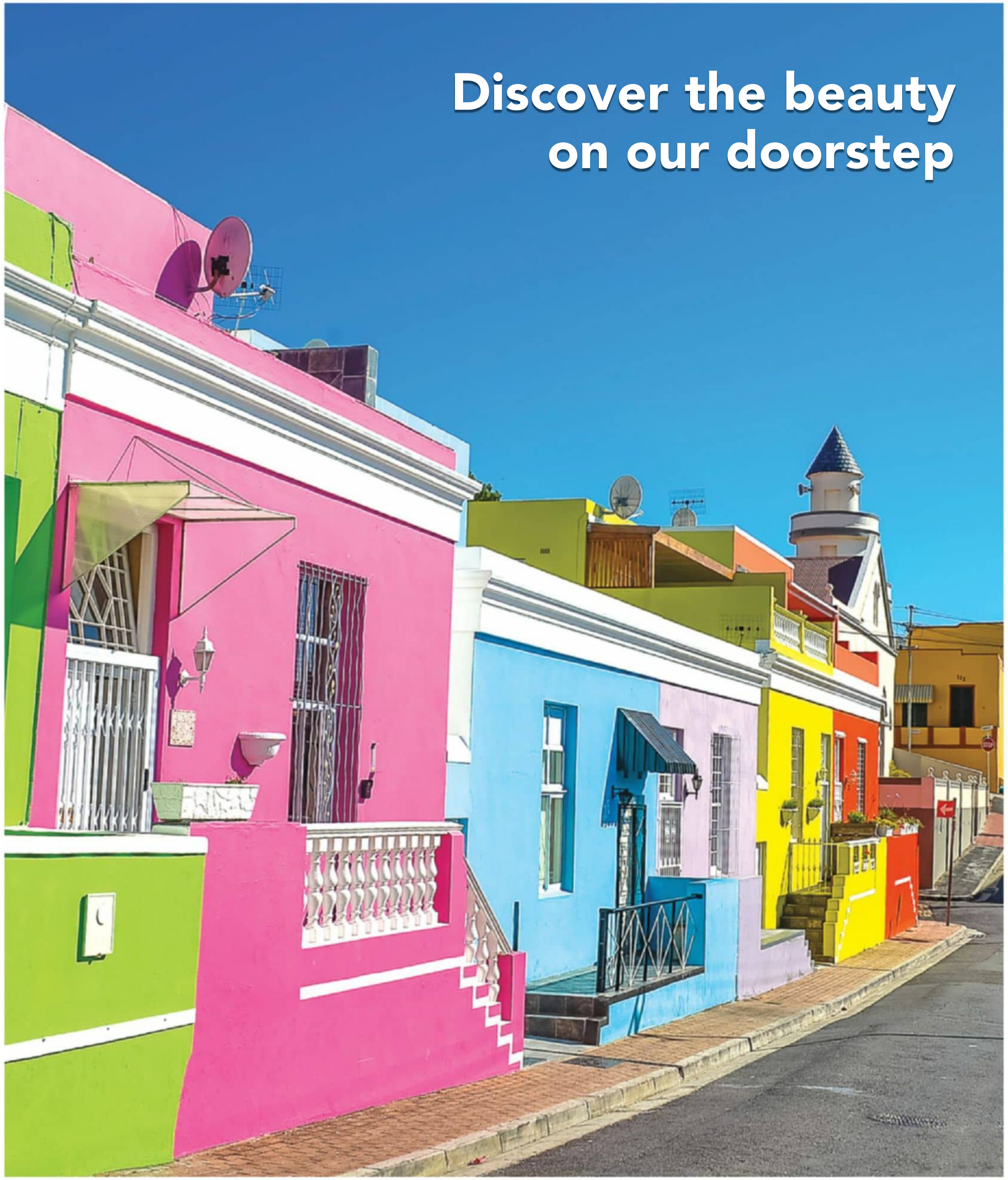
Make the most of a trip to the Garden Route and book a table at Lakeside Lodge for a meal overlooking the tranquil lake. Meals can be enjoyed in the modern restaurant or outdoors on the tree-shaded lawn. Food here has a French influence with a few South African and other global classics added in. Presentation is beautiful and mains are hearty and filling. The prawn tempura is divine and Karoo lamb is a good choice for main course. Wine tastings, such as the popular wine and chocolate pairing, are popular and if you are in town over a weekend, book a cruise tasting on Swartvlei Lake.

Lakeside Lodge and Spa, 3 Lakeside Drive, Swartvlei, Sedgefield, Western Cape.
Open for breakfast from Monday to Sunday from 08h00 to 11h00, lunch from 12h00 to 16h00 and dinner from 18h00 to 21h00.
Tel: (044) 343-1844
www.lakesidelodge.co.za/restaurant

9th AVENUE BISTRO | Morningside, Durban

Owners Graham and Gina Neilson have worked all over the world, but Durban is home and upon their return, the couple decided to open their dream restaurant. Modern and unpretentious, the restaurant's main emphasis is on high quality seasonal ingredients. Graham in the kitchen strives for perfection with every plate whilst Gina handles the front of house. Bistro classics sit cheek-by-jowl with modern dishes with global appeal and inspiration. Sustainability is another key ingredient that should not be overlooked. Both the food and wine menus change constantly to keep up with the seasons and new offerings from microbreweries and wine producers alike. Diners are encouraged to try the tasting menus .

Shop 2, Avonmore Centre, Ninth Avenue, Morningside, Durban, Kwazulu-Natal.
Open for lunch on Tuesday to Friday from 12h00 to 14h30 and for dinner from Monday to Saturday from 18h00 to 21h30.
Tel: (031) 312-9134
Email: info@9thavenuebistro.co.za
www.9thavenuebistro.co.za



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